CIVIL SERVICES EXAMINATION

focus

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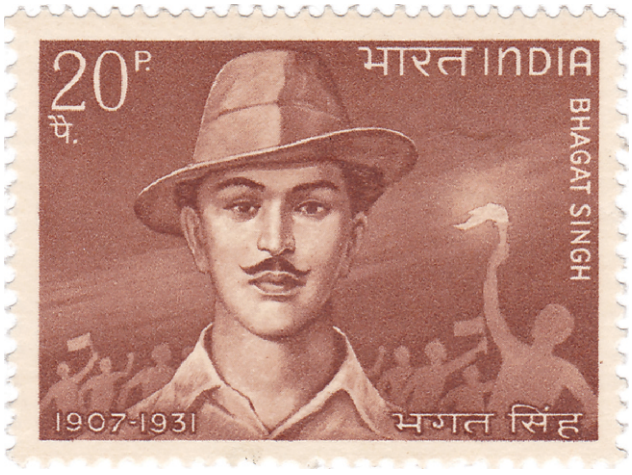

Lessons from the life of Bhagat Singh

Bhagat Singh is indubitably one of the most charismatic revolutionaries in the history of India's Independence movement. He did not merely take a vigorous role in the freedom struggle but also motivated many other youths to join the same not only while he was alive but even after his death.

Bhagat Singh went to the gallows, along with two of his comrades, Sukhdev and Rajguru, on March 23, 1931. Bhagat Singh stands out in bold relief as someone who, at a young age, defined nation and nationalism for us. He had an alternative framework of governance, which is strongly reflected in the writings that he has left behind. Sadly, we hardly care to revisit this serious intellectual inheritance and only venerate him as a martyr. This veneration is laudable but incomplete.

He was barely 17 when he published his first article, in 1924, in **Matwala**, a Hindi magazine from Calcutta. The subject was 'Universal Brotherhood', which was not a very easy issue to write on at such a young age. He imagined a world where "**all of us being one and none is the other**. It will really be a comforting time when the world will have no strangers." All those who are busy "othering" and creating strangers out of their own fellow citizens need to grapple with Bhagat Singh's views, instead of merely glorifying him as a martyr. He emphatically exclaimed that as long as words like black and white, civilized and uncivilized, ruler and the ruled, rich and poor, touchable and untouchable, etc., are in vogue there was no scope for universal brotherhood.

He went on to say, "We will have to **campaign for equality and equity**. Will have to punish those who oppose the creation of such a world." Among the heroes of our freedom struggle, he was perhaps the only one who had this vision at such a young age.

His **strongest critique was of untouchability and communalism**, which continue to torment us as a nation. He was **fiercely frank and bold enough to critically comment on the politics of senior leaders** such as Lala Lajpat Rai and express his differences.

The decade of the 1920s saw a rise in communal politics, from both Hindu and Muslim groups. However, Bhagat

Singh steadfastly remained **committed to the idea of a plural and inclusive India**. He founded the Naujawan Bharat Sabha in Lahore in 1926, whose manifesto said, “Religious superstitions and bigotry are a great hindrance in our progress. They have proved an obstacle in our way and we must do away with them. The thing that cannot bear free thought must perish.”

In 1928, Bhagat Singh was acutely **conscious of the divisiveness of mixing religion with politics** and he wrote, “If religion is separated from politics, then all of us can jointly initiate political activities, even though in matters of religion we might have many differences with each other. We feel that the true well-wishers of India would follow these principles and save India.” None cared to listen to this voice of sanity then. Even now, many of us continue to peddle religion to promote political prospects.

He was aware of international revolutionary struggles as well. His three-part article on **anarchism (1928)**, appeared before he authored his masterly essay, '**Why I am an Atheist**'. Thus we can see here the evolution of his ideas on politics, society, religion and even faith in god.

The lessons from his life remain as relevant today as they were during the independence movement. It is a proof that one is never too young to be politically aware, to educate oneself about the truth of the world at large, and to actively play a role in shaping the society one wants to live in. Bhagat Singh the thinker, the revolutionary, and the philosopher continues to be a shining beacon for young people in India, and indeed, the rest of the world.

Today, we need to remember his revolutionary ideas. Mere valorisation of his nationalism and ultimate sacrifice is true but sadly incomplete. Today, his intellectual bequest should be a beacon to build a new India.

focus

CRITICAL NOTES FOR THE PREPARATION OF GENERAL STUDIES PAPERS

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The purpose of Focus is to expound the applied nature of General Studies to Civil Services aspirants thereby making them aware of the real demand of UPSC exam.

The sources relied for selection and analysis of issues are:

1. The Hindu, The Hindu (Sunday)
2. The Indian Express
3. The Times of India
4. Asian Age
5. The Tribune
6. The Economic Times
7. Hindu Business Line
8. Frontline
9. Economic and Political Weekly
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Dear Students,

FOCUS is the Study Circle's monthly publication of contemporary issues and current affairs analysis. It is in fact a collective effort, by experienced educators in varied themes, of identifying current affairs in light of the UPSC syllabus, supplementing them with background information, explaining their related dimensions, lending them a generalist viewpoint and thus producing critical notes for the preparation of General Studies' syllabus.

The publication, as the name suggests, focuses solely on issues which are relevant to the factual as well as applied aspects of the General Studies' syllabus. That is how Focus covers all anticipated issues and themes for the upcoming Civil Services Examination (CSE).

Features

PART ONE | CURRENT AFFAIRS ANALYSIS

- **This month edition covers analysis of news from the immediately preceding month.**
- All news/issues are categorized and clubbed syllabus-wise (International Relations, Polity & Governance, Science & Technology, Ethics, Integrity & Aptitude and so on) for efficient study.
- Background information has been added to provide context.
- Related and Additional information-dimensions have been explained to add depth to your understanding.
- Maps and figures have been provided for associative and retentive learning.
- Practice Questions

PART TWO | ETHICS, INTEGRITY & APTITUDE

- Coverage from varied sources

PART THREE | ESSAYS FOR YOU

- Selected essays from Rau's GSI students

For further understanding or discussion in any topic, please consult your respective professors.

Good Luck!
RAU'S IAS STUDY CIRCLE

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PART ONE

CURRENT AFFAIRS ANALYSIS

logical .simple .targeted
analysis & explanation
of all relevant news of the month

INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

GS PAPER (PRELIMS) & GS PAPER II (MAIN)

GEOPOLITICS

INDIA & US RELATIONS

#BILATERAL RELATIONS

PRIMARY SOURCE THE HINDU

IN NEWS

Experts are speculating that the Bonhomie India - US relationship witnessed during Trump' presidency is not going to be the same under Joe Biden. Although the main outlines of relationship are going to remain the same but there are issues where a diversion from Trump's approach towards India will be witnessed. So, let us look at how India - US relationship evolved during the Trump era and how is it going to change under the New President.

- Joe Biden has reversed the U.S.'s withdrawal from the Paris Climate Agreement, the World Health Organization, the UN Human Rights Council, and has cancelled the "Muslim" ban and other immigration policies.
- **Collaboration under Joe Biden**: On majority of issues, including COVID-19, climate, health care, immigration and restoring America's global standing, India and US are already engaging each other, and are on the same page.

STRATEGIC CONVERGENCE

- Joe Biden has given a push to the trump's policies on **Quadrilateral security dialogue and Indo-Pacific policy**. This was seen in a recent call that happened between US President and the Prime Minister.
- Further there were two calls between the U.S. Secretary of State and the External Affairs Minister, in addition to a virtual Quad Ministerial meeting that included the Foreign Ministers of Japan and Australia.
- **Climate Change:** Mr. Biden's Climate Change Envoy John Kerry praised India's efforts on renewable energy and emissions.
- **Health**: An overarching memorandum of understanding (MoU) to enhance health cooperation is likely to be signed between both the countries.
- **Immigration:** New president has lifted restrictions and caps on a number of visas and green cards, which is a crucial issue for Indian workforce in the US.

Divergence from Trump's approach: Although the main contours of India – US relations are going to remain same but there are areas where Joe Biden might take a different view than his predecessor.

US – INDIA AND CHINA

- During Ladakh standoff with China along LAC, US under Trump had provided moral and material support in the form of greater military cooperation and intelligence sharing.
- India held the **MALABAR naval exercise and the meetings of Quad**. Trump did not mince his words in taking on China in the form of trade war and accusing it of being responsible for the COVID pandemic.
- However, Joe Biden is calculated in his opposition of China which is visible from his statements. He sees **China as competitor** in areas such as defence, trade and technology, but has also shown the need for cooperation in certain areas such as climate change, where it is in the U.S.'s "interests to do so.

- Further some of the decisions are likely to hit Indian Pharmaceuticals where India is a major producer and could be hit if the U.S. insists on localising production.
- India-Japan-Australia are already working on a trilateral **Supply Chain Resilience Initiative (SCRI)** to counter their dependence on Chinese goods and the U.S. is not a part of.

HUMAN RIGHTS

- Biden's has vowed to put **human rights "at the centre of Foreign Policy".** In the recent call between US President and the Prime Minister, it was outlined that Biden's commitment to put human rights "at the centre of Foreign Policy".
- However, there are concerns that new US administration has started to comment upon the human rights issues in India specially with regards to freedom of speech and the way India is handling the farmer protest, and the J&K situation.
- Joe Biden is not going to ignore government's actions to shut down international agencies — Amnesty, Greenpeace, Compassion International — in the same way as the previous administration did.

HUMAN RIGHTS IN SOUTH ASIA

- Further the U.S. will want India to partner in ensuring human rights in South Asia, particularly given its current term in the UN Security Council. Both countries have shown concerns over the coup by the Army in Myanmar (Burma). However, the views expressed by both on this issue have been different.
- Further on the issue of country specific Human rights resolution by Human Rights Council against Sri Lanka, India is going to support Sri Lanka keeping in mind its own interest with the neighbouring country. This would be at clear divergence from the approach that US is going to take.

  Russia: Another area of concern in India - US relations is the India - Russia relationship. India is importing S - 400 missile defence system from Russia. Due to this, sanctions can be imposed by US under its CAATSA law.

AFGHANISTAN AND PAKISTAN

- On Afghanistan, India has charted an independent course from the U.S., standing firmly with the Ashraf Ghani government and resolutely refusing to engage the Taliban.
- This is pragmatic, but it also means the U.S. will continue to see India as "not part of the problem, not part of the solution", and seek more support from Pakistan to facilitate its exit.

INDIA AND SRI LANKA

#BILATERAL RELATIONS #INDIA AND ITS NEIGHBOURHOOD

PRIMARY SOURCE THE HINDU SECONDARY SOURCE The Indian EXPRESS

IN NEWS

Recent visit of the PM of Pakistan to Sri Lanka has brought into light the impact of Sri Lanka - Pak bonhomie on India. A controversy has also erupted because of cancellation of Pak PM's address to the Sri Lankan parliament probably on India's insistence. In this backdrop, let us understand impact of this visit for India.

PAK - SRI LANKA RELATIONS

- Pakistan is Sri Lanka's second largest trading partner in South Asia after India.
- Both the countries decided to reactivate a Joint Working Group to resolve pending technical issues on trade.
- Sri Lanka and Pakistan have a free trade agreement dating back to 2005.

- Pakistan's top exports to Sri Lanka are textiles and cement; Sri Lanka's top exports to Pakistan are tea, rubber, and readymade garments.
- Over the last decade, Pakistan has also tried to work on a cultural connect with Sri Lanka by highlighting its ancient Buddhist connections and sites.

DEFENCE TIES WITH PAK

- Defence ties are a strong pillar of the Sri Lanka-Pakistan bilateral relationship.
- After pulling back the IPKF in 1990, India provided no active defence support to the Sri Lankan military, although there was intelligence sharing during the war against the LTTE.
- Sri Lanka turned to Pakistan for arms and ammunition, as well as training for its fighter pilots, in the last stages of the war.
- President Gotabaya Rajapaksa, who was defence secretary at the time, visited Pakistan in 2008 to request emergency assistance with military supplies.
- During the 1971 war, Pakistani jets refuelled in Sri Lanka. Pakistan's envoys to Sri Lanka are usually retired military officials.
- This was Imran Khan's only second foray in the neighbourhood since becoming Prime Minister. His first was to Afghanistan last November
- The visit signalled that despite India's best efforts at "isolating" Pakistan, Islamabad has friends in the neighbourhood.
- This was also the first visit by a head of government to Sri Lanka since the pandemic began.

ISSUES FACED BY SRI LANKA

- It is bracing for a resolution against it at the UN Human Rights Commission for withdrawing from resolution 30/1 of September 2015, under which it committed to carry out war crimes investigations. In this line, it is seeking support from neighbouring countries.
- The Islamic world is also appalled by Sri Lanka's tight rules for disposal of bodies of Muslims who have died of Covid-19. Burials are not allowed; all bodies must be cremated.
- The rule created a storm in Sri Lanka and was being perceived as persecution of Muslims by the state.
- Muslims, who make up about 11 per cent of Sri Lanka's population, have had tense relations with the Sinhala Buddhist majority for much of the last decade
- The recent visit of Pak PM from assumes importance in the backdrop of these issue faced by Sri Lanka.

INDIA - PAK- SRI LANKA

- A speculated reason for the cancellation of Imran Khan's address to Parliament was concern that he would raise the Kashmir issue.
- Sri Lanka did not want to irritate India at a time when it is already cut up about Sri Lanka's abrupt withdrawal from a tripartite agreement (along with Japan) for the development of the East Container Terminal at Colombo port, and the award of a contract to a Chinese company to set up a hybrid renewable energy in an island off Jaffna.
- Further, Sri Lanka has learnt to balance its ties with its neighbouring countries.
- Also India has not perceived Pakistan as a serious rival in Sri Lanka so far.
- At times the Indian security establishment has voiced concerns about Pakistan's role in the radicalisation of Muslims — especially in Eastern Sri Lanka.
- Further, concerns have been raised by India, about a convergence of interests between Sri Lanka, China, and Pakistan in the Indian Ocean region and in defence co-operation.
- In 2016, India put pressure on Sri Lanka to drop a plan to buy the Chinese JF-17 Thunder aircraft made in Pakistan's Kamra Aeronautical Complex, and co-produced by the Chinese Chengdu Aircraft Corporation.

UNHRC RESOLUTION AGAINST SRI LANKA

#INTERNATIONAL EVENTS

PRIMARY SOURCE The Indian EXPRESS SECONDARY SOURCE THE WIRE

IN NEWS

The UN Human Rights Council 46th regular session will decide the fate of a critical resolution against Sri Lanka.

The resolution submitted by the Core Group comprising the United Kingdom, Germany, Malawi, Montenegro and North Macedonia, responds to a report released by the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights. The report warned that Sri Lanka's failure to address human rights violations and war crimes committed in the past had put the country on a "dangerous path" that could lead to a "recurrence" of policies and practices that gave rise to the earlier situation (War against LTTE 2008). So, let us understand the Key highlights of the report by Office of UN High Commissioner and India's views on the same.

UNHRC RESOLUTIONS AGAINST SRI LANKA

Background –

- The Tamil Tigers had been waging a full-scale war for an independent state of Tamil Eelam in the North and East of Sri Lanka since 1983.
- After the failure of the Norwegian mediated peace process in 2006 the Sri Lankan military launched offensives aimed at recapturing territory controlled by the Tamil Tigers.
- There were war crimes and crimes against humanity that were committed by the Sri Lankan military and the rebel Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (Tamil Tigers) during the Sri Lankan Civil War, particularly during the final months of the Eelam War IV phase in 2009.
- The war crimes include attacks on civilians and civilian buildings by both sides; executions of combatants and prisoners by both sides; enforced disappearances by the Sri Lankan military and paramilitary groups backed by them; acute shortages of food, medicine, and clean water for civilians trapped in the war zone; and child recruitment by the Tamil Tigers.
- A United Nations panel in 2011 found that as many as 40,000 Tamil civilians may have been killed in the final months of the civil war.
- At the 11th special session of the United Nations Human Rights Council (UNHRC) in May 2009 seventeen countries attempted to get the UNHRC to investigate war crimes in Sri Lanka.
- This was thwarted after the Sri Lankan government received support from China, Russia, India and developing countries
- The UNHRC instead passed resolution S-11/1 in 2009 which commended the Sri Lankan government's actions, condemned the Tamil Tigers and ignored allegations of violations of human rights and humanitarian law by government forces
- Then UNHRC adopted resolution 19/2 on promoting reconciliation and accountability in Sri Lanka.
- The resolution welcomed the constructive recommendations contained in the **Lessons Learnt and Reconciliation Commission (LLRC)**, a commission of inquiry appointed by the Sri Lankan government to look back at the civil war, and noted with concern that the report did not adequately address serious allegations of violations of international law.
- The failure of the Sri Lankan government to comply with resolution 19/2 led to resolution 22/1 being passed in March 2013 at the 22nd regular session of the UNHRC. This resolution called on the Sri Lankan government to carry out an independent and credible investigation into alleged violations.
- The Sri Lankan government ignored the resolution and as a consequence in March 2014 the 25th session of the UNHRC passed resolution 25/1 authorising an international investigation into alleged war crimes during the 2002-09 period.
- In 2015, Sri Lanka's decided to become a co-sponsor of resolution 30/1. It was followed up by two other resolutions 34/1 and 40/1.
- After failing to meet deadlines set out in the resolution 30/1, the Sri Lankan government set up a Commission of Inquiry, an Office of Missing Persons, and an Office of Reparations, in the final months before it fell apart due to tensions between the President and the Prime Minister.

HIGHLIGHTS OF RECENT UN – OHCHR REPORT

- It warned against accelerating militarisation of civilian governmental functions, reversal of important constitutional safeguards, political obstruction of

accountability, exclusionary rhetoric, intimidation of civil society, and the use of anti-terrorism laws.

- The Sri Lankan government had created "parallel military task forces and commissions that encroach on civilian functions, and reversed important institutional checks and balances, threatening democratic gains, the independence of the judiciary and other key institutions".
- The report also talks about shrinking space for independent media, and civil society and human rights organisations in Sri Lanka.

ZERO DRAFT RESOLUTION

- "Zero draft" resolution tabled by the Core Group on Sri Lanka at the UNHCR — the UK, Germany, and Canada incorporates some of the elements of the report, including those on strengthening the HRC's capacity on preserving evidence, devising strategies for future accountability processes, and supporting judicial proceedings in members states with jurisdiction.
- It talks about encouraging the Sri Lankan government to implement the requirements of the previous 30/1 resolution (from which it pulled out) and two follow-on resolutions, 34/1 and 40/1.
- The draft resolution asks the High Commissioner's office to monitor progress on national reconciliation and accountability mechanisms and come up with updates.

INDIA'S VOTE AT RESOLUTIONS ON SRI LANKA AT UNHRC

YEAR	RESOLUTION	INDIA'S VOTE
2009	Resolution S 11/1	Yes
2012	Resolution 19/2	Yes
2013	Resolution 22/1	Yes
2014	Resolution 25/1	Abstain
2015	Resolution 30/1	Adopted without a vote
2017	Resolution 34/1	Adopted without a vote
2019	Resolution 40/1	Adopted without a vote

- Initial Votes by India in favor of the resolutions and against Sri Lanka were mainly based on the local politics in the State of Tamil Nadu owing to the coalition government the center.
- On the 2013 resolution 22/1 India voted in favour of the resolution and against Sri Lanka. This was mainly because Just ahead of the vote, Tamil Nadu's main opposition party, Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (DMK), had withdrawn from the Centre's ruling alliance on the grounds that India was not doing enough to alleviate the alleged human rights violations of Sri Lankan Tamils.
- However, after the coalition era ended at the central government level, India's stance has not been much influenced by the local politics but has been influenced by geopolitical concerns owing to the increasing Chinese presence in the Indian Ocean region.
- On 2014 resolution 25/1, India abstained during the vote on grounds that the resolution ignored steps taken by Sri Lanka at reconciliation.
- In 2015 Resolution 30/1 and subsequent resolutions 34/1 and 40/1, India did not have dilemma because Sri Lanka itself joined the resolution which was adopted unanimously without a vote.
- However, the present resolution has come at a time when Sri Lanka has already walked out of the previous resolutions and clearly the resolution will not be adopted unanimously. It is in this backdrop that India will have to take a clear stance and decide on voting either in favor or against such a resolution.

LATEST RESOLUTION AND INDIA

- Sri Lanka has officially sought India's help to muster support against the resolution, which it has described as "unwanted interference by powerful countries".
- Whatever be the final outcome of the resolution it is likely to be important for India-Sri Lanka relations, and for India internally, in the run-up to the Assembly elections in Tamil Nadu.
- India has indicated that it has kept all options open and has signaled to Sri Lanka that its support for the country at the United Nations Human Rights Council should not be taken for granted.
- Indian permanent representative to the UN in Geneva noted that the UN report had raised "important

concerns" and aspirations of Tamils contributions to Sri Lanka's unity and integrity.

- India also noted that the Sri Lankan government "has articulated its position on these issues as well".
- India has reiterated its commitment to find a lasting and effective solution for this issue.
- India's position rested on two pillars. The first was support for Sri Lanka's unity and territorial integrity. Second pillar was commitment to Sri Lankan Tamils' aspirations for "equality, justice, peace and dignity".
- Calling on Sri Lanka to address Tamil aspirations, India said that Colombo should take "necessary steps" through the "process of reconciliation and full implementation of the 13th Amendment to the Constitution of Sri Lanka
- India has not yet taken a call on its vote in the resolution, as it awaits the resolution's final shape.

EAST CONTAINER TERMINAL

#BILATERAL RELATIONS

PRIMARY SOURCE THE HINDU SECONDARY SOURCE The Indian EXPRESS

IN NEWS

Sri Lanka has said that it will develop the West Container Terminal (WCT) at the Colombo Port, along with India and Japan. The decision comes a month after the Rajapaksa government rejected the two partners from a 2019 tripartite agreement to jointly develop the East Container Terminal (ECT), citing resistance to "foreign involvement". So let us briefly look at the developments in this regard.

DEVELOPMENTS

- In May 2019, the previous regime in Sri Lanka under Maithripala Sirisena signed a Memorandum of Cooperation with India and Japan to jointly develop and operate the **East Container Terminal** wherein India and Japan together were to hold 49% stake in ECT. However, then the opposition parties in Sri Lanka opposed the Indian Involvement in the construction of the port.
- After assuming power, the pro-China regime under Rajapaksa decided to form five-member committee to look into concerns raised over the development of port.
- Now the Rajapaksa government's decided to overturn Sri Lanka's tripartite agreement to develop Colombo's East Container Terminal. The project, worth an estimated $500-$700 million, was a key marker for infrastructure investment in the island nation where Chinese projects are most prominent.

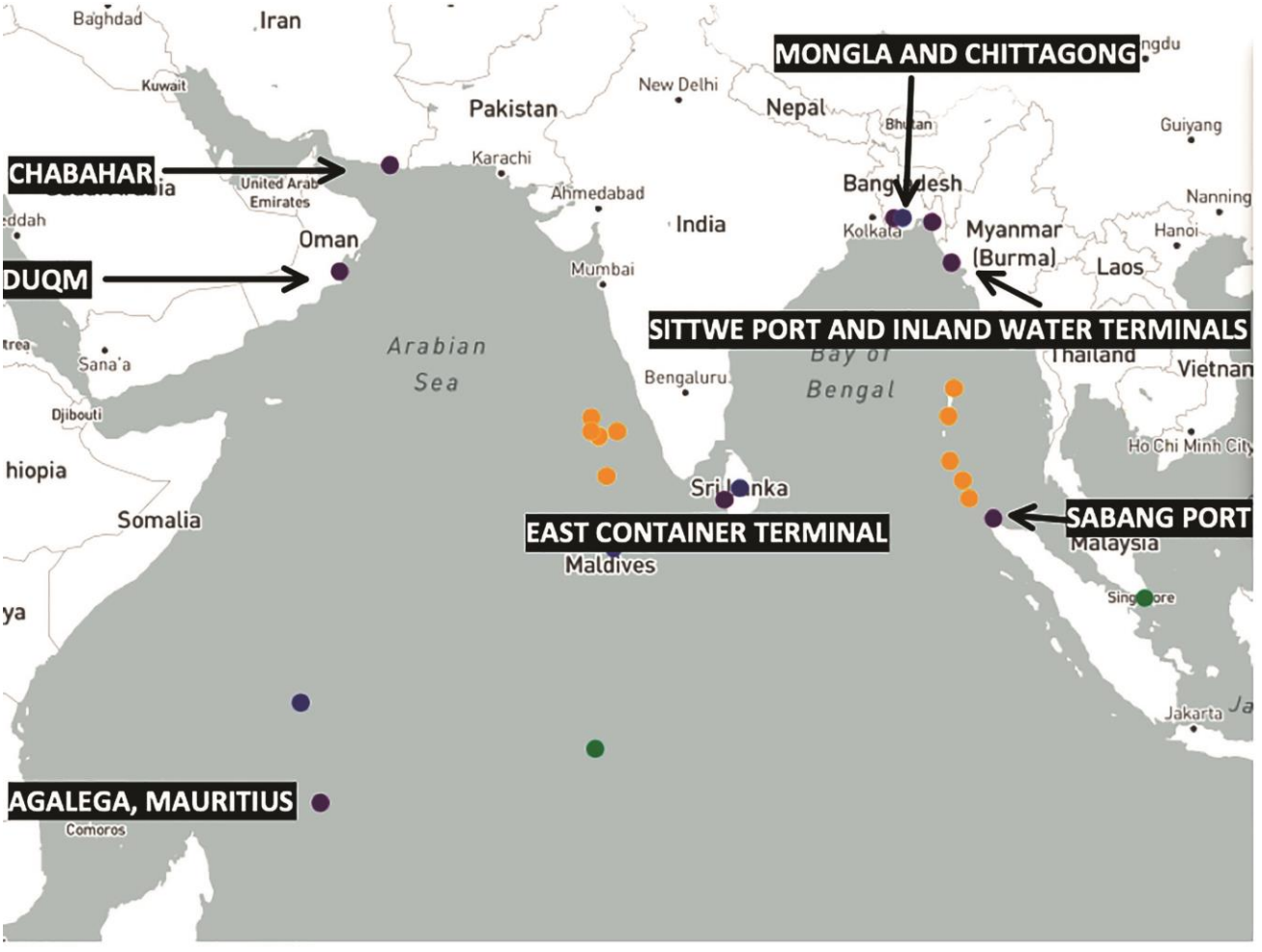
THE IMPORTANCE OF INDIA HAVING A TERMINAL AT COLOMBO PORT

- This port was considered to be strategic for India since it was adjacent to the Chinese-run Colombo International Container Terminal (CICT).
- More than two-thirds of trans-shipment at this port is tied to India, making it an important trade and connectivity link.
- As a joint venture for India and Japan to invest in, the ECT project was also expected to showcase how the two Indo-Pacific partners, and also Quad members, could provide South Asia with viable, transparent and sustainable alternatives for financing and development.

REASSIGNMENT OF WEST TERMINAL CONTAINER PORT

- Commercially, the west terminal offer is better for India as it gives 85% stake for developers of the West Terminal against the 49% in ECT.
- And geo-politically too, West Terminal is almost the same if they consider the security aspect and the necessity to have a port terminal in Sri Lanka.
- West Terminal is no smaller in size or depth compared to the East Terminal.
- There is no difference between East and West Terminals except for the fact that development of the ECT is partially completed while the development of the West Terminal has to start from scratch.

INDIAN AND CHINESE PORTS IN THE INDIAN OCEAN REGION



- Based on the **theory of string pearls** in the Indian Ocean, China is investing in strategically important foreign commercial ports.
- Some of these ports include Chittagong in Bangladesh, Gwadar in Pakistan, Hambantota in Sri Lanka, Kyaupkyu in Myanmar, Malacca in Malaysia, Mombasa in Kenya
- Chinese scholars recognize the far-reaching strategic significance of these projects for the success of the maritime Silk Road.
- On the other hand India has also begun to invest heavily, albeit quietly, in expanding its naval and air power across the Indian Ocean.
- The effort is driven by two factors: a desire to improve maritime domain awareness and maritime security throughout the vast region, and New Delhi's growing anxieties about Chinese inroads in its strategic backyard
- Piracy, illegal fishing, and other maritime crimes remain serious concerns and potential sources of instability around the entire Indian Ocean rim
- As a response, India has presence in the ports shown in the picture above.

MILITARY COUP IN MYANMAR

#INDIA AND ITS NEIGHBOURHOOD

PRIMARY SOURCE THE HINDU | SECONDARY SOURCE The Indian EXPRESS

IN NEWS

Myanmar's military has staged a coup on February 1, 2021 arresting civilian leaders, shutting off the internet and

cutting off flights. In this backdrop let us understand the political dynamics of Myanmar and also what was the reaction of major countries of the world.

Background: In 2008, the military had written a new Constitution that made sure that the Army's interests would be protected even if there is a transition.

IMPORTANT CLAUSES OF CONSTITUTION

- According to the Constitution, the **President must have military experience** and he himself, his spouse or children **"shall not be subject of a foreign power or citizen of a foreign country".** (Ms. Suu Kyi, whose two sons are British citizens, cannot become President).
- The Constitution mandates that **the Defence and Interior Ministries be controlled by the military.**
- **25% of the total seats in Parliament** (166 out of the 664-member house) are **reserved for the military**, giving it a veto over any move to change the Constitution.

POLITICAL TIMELINE AFTER 2010

- The political climate in the junta-led Myanmar started changing **around 2010.**
- Aung San Suu Kyi's National League for Democracy (NLD), which had not recognised the Constitution, **boycotted the 2010 election**, which the Army-backed Union Solidarity and Development Party (USDP) won.
- In the **next five years**, the Army loosened its grip on the government and society. Political prisoners, including Ms. Suu Kyi, were released. Media censorship was eased. Ms. Suu Kyi's party also changed its earlier position and accepted the Constitution. **The NLD won the 2015 election**, and formed the government, raising hopes that the country is on its way to full transition to democracy.
- **2020 elections**: With 166 seats reserved for the military, the USDP wanted only 167 seats to form the government and appoint the next President, whereas the NLD needed 333 seats for an outright victory.
- The voters gave the NLD 396 seats, while the USDP ended up with just 33.

WHAT IS ARMY'S STAND?

- According to Army, there was "terrible fraud in the voter list" in the parliamentary elections held in November 2020, and that the Election Commission "failed to settle the matter."
- Claiming that this development would "obstruct the path to democracy", the army declared an emergency, transferring all powers to Commander-in-Chief Min Aung Hlaing.
- However, the Union Election Commission (UEC) has rejected all of the military's claims of electoral fraud in the November general election saying each vote was counted transparently and witnessed by election candidates, election staff, the media, observers and other civil society organizations.)

THE DECISION IS QUESTIONABLE ON LEGAL AND CONSTITUTIONAL GROUNDS SINCE

- Electoral issues need to be addressed and resolved by relevant authorities, not the military leadership.
- Article 417 of the Constitution empowers the President to proclaim emergency, in consultation with the National Defence and Security Council. It does not seem that the Council met or presidential consent was obtained. In fact, President Win Myint and the de facto head of the government, Ms. Suu Kyi, have been detained.

REACTIONS TO THE MILITARY COUP

- **United Nations:** António Guterres, the United Nations secretary-general, said the coup

developments "represent a serious blow to democratic reforms in Myanmar."

- **USA:** "The United States opposes any attempt to alter the outcome of recent elections or impede Myanmar's democratic transition and will take **action against those responsible if these steps are not reversed**," the White House statement.
- **China:** China refrained from criticising the military leadership for seizing power in a coup and urged the international community to not interfere. China is not in favor of external powers "taking actions that would raise tensions".
- **India's reaction:** India expressed *"deep concern"* over the reports of military coup in Myanmar. India stressed that the rule of law and the democratic process must be upheld.

WAY AHEAD FOR INDIA

- Regardless of the reasons for the coup, the step is a setback for the international community's efforts to engage with Myanmar, after a strict sanctions regime.
- India is committed to the policy of non-interference in another state's internal affairs guided by the national interest. Therefore, in managing relations with Myanmar, India astutely balances its principles, values, interests and geopolitical realities by
  - nudging along the democratic process by supporting Ms. Suu Kyi;
  - working with the military to ensure its strategic interests to the North East;
  - deny China a monopoly on Myanmar's infrastructure and resources.
- The government will need to craft its response taking into consideration the new geopolitical realities of the U.S. and China as well as its own standing as a South Asian power, and as a member of the UN Security Council.

INDIA AND CHINA

#BILATERAL RELATIONS # INDIA AND ITS NEIGHBOURHOOD

PRIMARY SOURCE THE HINDU

IN NEWS

In the recent context of competition and rivalry going on between India and China, it has been argued that India and China should have complimentary roles, share prosperity and be independent of each other and of the West, in the long term. So, let us understand the areas of complementarity and competition for the two neighbors and also look at a long-term analysis of the course that India-China relationship should take.

REALISM IN FOREIGN POLICY

- External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar said that while both India and China remained committed to a multipolar world, they should recognise that a "multipolar Asia" was one of its essential constituents. ***(In the context of China trying to assert itself in Asia with conflicts in Ladakh, South China sea and the debt diplomacy.)***
- In this line, the defence ministry has used the phrase "sanctity of our claims in Eastern Ladakh" instead of the term "border" used since 1954, which is clearly a departure from past position.
- External affairs ministry has said - We have a **"special and privileged strategic partnership"** with Russia, which provides more than three-quarter of India's military equipment, and a **"comprehensive global strategic partnership"** with the U.S, which highlights that India is pursuing its interests.
- This statement has been made despite the **United States Strategic Framework for the Indo-Pacific,** 2018, wishing that India sees the U.S. as its preferred partner on security issues.
- Further, India's relationship with the Quad has been cautious where the other three members (US, Japan and Australia) are military partners.
- All these points highlight that India needs to pursue its foreign policy interests realistically.

DIPLOMATIC CHALLENGE OF RISE OF CHINA AND THE CHALLENGE TO US HEGEMONY

India is facing the challenge of balancing its interests in a world which is witnessing rise of China and the hegemony of the US being challenged on various aspects.

STRATEGIC CHALLENGE

- On the one hand India has to engage with China which is expanding its Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) and on the other hand India is involved with the strategic, security and technological concerns of the U.S.
- The U.S. **'Annual Report to Congress: Military and Security Developments involving the People's Republic of China'** has cautioned against the declining hegemonic military position of the US.
- Obama's pivot Asia policy failed to deter China's overtures in the South China Sea.
- Even Trump's policy of trade tariffs turned out to be detrimental to American consumers and companies.

ECONOMIC RISE OF CHINA

- Further there is speculation of Chinese Renminbi might become global reserve currency or e-yuan becoming the digital payments currency.
- China is the world's largest trading economy. It could soon become the world's largest economy.
- The Fortune Global 500 list of the world's largest companies by revenue for the first time contains more companies based in China, including Hong Kong, than in the U.S.
- The BRI countries are using the renminbi in financial transactions with China.
- Even the European Union, overlooking US sanctions has created its own cross-border clearing mechanism for trade with China.
- China has stitched together an investment agreement with the EU and with most of Asia.
- Relative attractiveness will determine when the dollar remains the global reserve currency or not.

POLICY OF CONVERGING AND CONTRASTING INTERESTS

- The EU's China policy of seeing the emerging superpower as a partner, competitor, and economic rival depending on the policy area in question is going to be the global norm.
- India's participation in both the China and Russia led Shanghai Cooperation Organisation and, in the U.S., -led Quad, with its anti-China stance reflects a similar approach.
- Within the United Nations, India's interests have greater congruence with China's interests rather than the U.S.'s and the EU's.
- China is opening new opportunities for countries in the Eurasian landmass means that ASEAN will not easily move out of the BRI infrastructure, digital, finance and trade linkages
- The China-led **Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank** has increased its membership to 100 countries.
- China is now the second-biggest financial contributor to the UN and has published more high-impact research papers than the U.S. did in 23 out of 30 "hot" research fields and enhancing its 'soft power' nearly to levels achieved by the U.S. earlier.
- Instead of an alternate development model, India should move the Quad towards supplementing the infrastructure push of the BRI in line with other strategic concerns in the region.

BRIDGING ROLE ON GLOBAL GOVERNANCE

- Another area where India can play a 'bridging role' is global governance whose principles, institutions and structures now have to accommodate other views for issue-based understandings.
- President Xi Jinping's "community with shared future for mankind", and Prime Minister of India's "climate justice" and asking how long India will be excluded from the UN Security Council, challenge the frame of the liberal order without providing specific alternatives.
- With respect to digital data, India has recently expressed that there must be reciprocity in data sharing, and this is the kind of 'big idea' for sharing prosperity that will gain traction with other countries.
- India's recent policies are gaining influence at the expense of China and the West, and both know this trend will accelerate.
- The steps to a $5 trillion economy, shift to indigenous capital military equipment, and a new Science, Technology and Innovation Policy underline impact, capacity and interests.
- ASEAN remains keen India re-join its trade pact (RCEP) to balance China.
- It is being recognised that India's software development prowess could shape a sustainable post-industrial state different to the U.S. and China model.

CONCLUSION

As in the historical past, Asia is big enough for both Asian giants to have complementary roles, share prosperity and be independent of each other and of the West.

US AND ISRAEL

#GEOPOLITICS

PRIMARY SOURCE | THE HINDU

IN NEWS

Experts have outlined that even though the new president Joe Biden is returning to the pre trump stance of supporting a two State Solution in principle for the Israel Palestine Conflict the situation is going not going to change much. So, let us look at the way in which US policy on Israel evolved during the Trump era and how it is likely to shaped under Joe Biden.

POLICY UNDER DONALD TRUMP

- Supported Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's expansionist polices.
- Trump proposed that 30% of the **West Bank** consisting of the Jordan Valley and settlement blocs be annexed to Israel.
- He moved the American embassy from Tel Aviv to **Jerusalem** and endorsed the Israeli annexation of the **Syrian Golan Heights**, captured in 1967.
- He cut off $360 million annual funding to the **United Nations Relief and Works Agency**, which deals with Palestinian refugees, and shut down the Palestine Liberation Organization office in Washington D.C.

LIKELY CHANGES UNDER JOE BIDEN

- In principle acceptance of pre Trump Policy of a Two State solution.
- US will resume aid to the Palestinians.
- The new President has opposed Israel's formal annexation of one-third of the occupied territories.
- However, the U.S. embassy in Israel would remain in Jerusalem and would not be shifted again to Tel Aviv.

WHY A STATUS QUO WILL CONTINUE

- US administration has itself admitted that any solution in the near future is highly unlikely.
- The new secretary of State Blinken has accused the Palestinians of being responsible for the failure of negotiations.
- American policy has been influenced by the Israeli propaganda.
- This is because of the influence of the Israel lobby in Congress and the presence in key positions in successive administrations of people whose sympathies lay with Israel.
- As far as Middle East is concerned US considers Israel to be its stable ally in the region.
- As far as the resumption of the Iran nuclear deal is concerned, Israel has opposed the U.S. returning to the agreement.

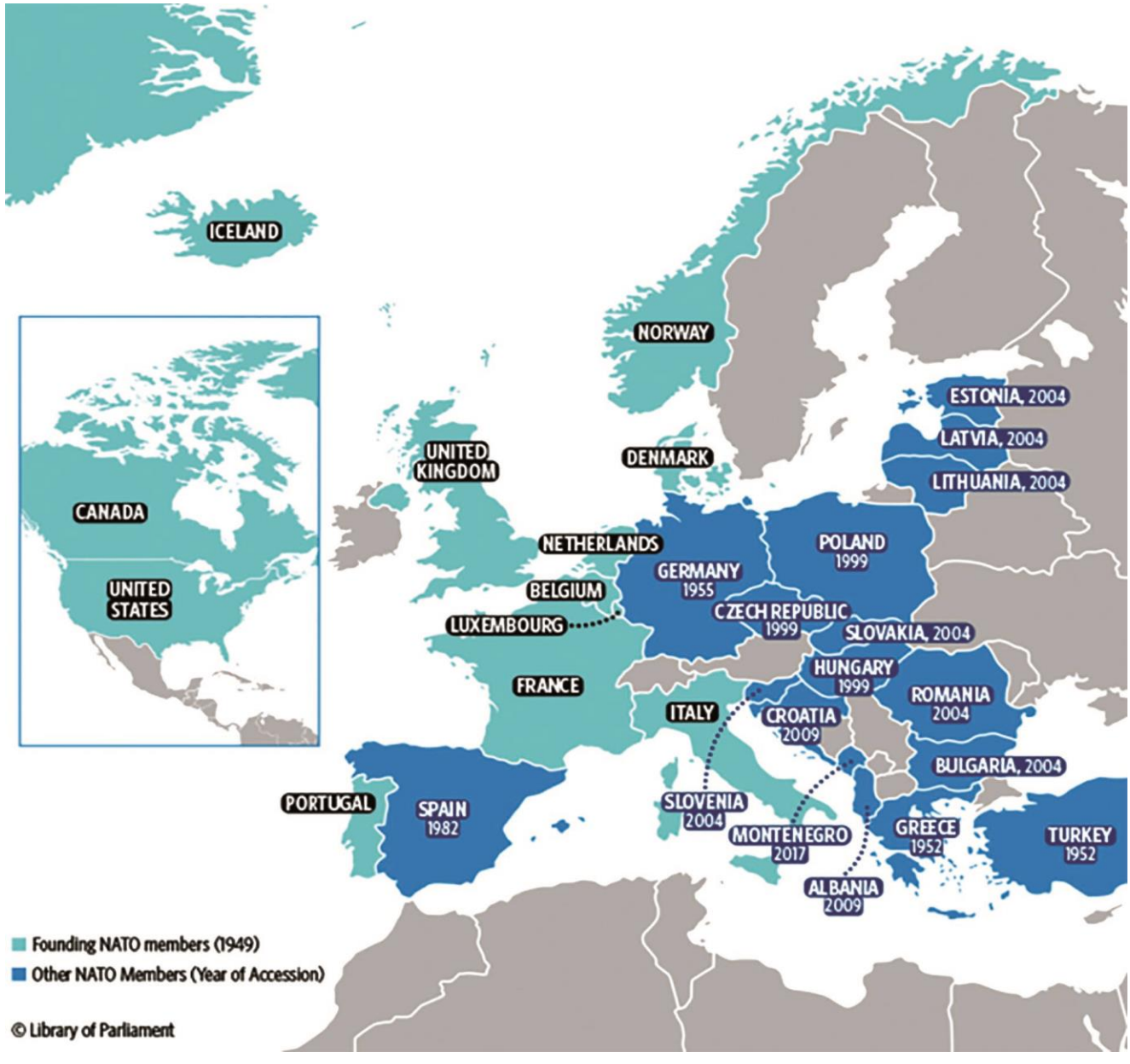
NATO

#GEOPOLITICS

PRIMARY SOURCE | THE HINDU

IN NEWS

Joe Biden declared the "transatlantic alliance is back" in a speech seeking to re-establish the United States as leader of the West. His predecessor Donald Trump's unpredictability and America First policy had shaken the post-WWII global order and strained relations between Western allies. He also pulled out or threatened to pull out of international treaties or institutions promoting a rules-based global order. In this backdrop let us look at one of the most important Post World War II alliance – NATO from prelims perspective.



ABOUT NORTH ATLANTIC TREATY ORGANIZATION

- NATO is Military alliance of countries from Europe and North America. It provides a link between the 'Western countries' of the two continents.

- NATO membership is open to any other European country which adheres to the principles of NATO and to contribute to the security of the North Atlantic area.
- The most recent member state to be added to NATO was North Macedonia on 27 March 2020.
- A NATO decision is the expression of the collective will of all 30 member countries since all decisions are taken by consensus.
- NATO's core tasks are: **Collective defense, Crisis-management & Cooperative security**.
- Principle of 'Collective Defense' under which an attack against one or several of NATO members is considered as an attack against all.
- The principle of collective defence is enshrined in **Article 5 of the Washington Treaty**.
- NATO invoked Article 5 for the first time in its history after the 9/11 terrorist attacks against the United States.
- NATO has taken collective defence measures on several occasions, for instance in response to the situation in Syria and in the wake of the Russia-Ukraine crisis.

UNHRC

#INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS

PRIMARY SOURCE | THE HINDU

IN NEWS

The U.S. will seek re-election to the United Nations Human Rights Council (UNHRC). This is the latest in a series of moves by the Biden administration to reverse a pattern of retreat from multilateralism that was characteristic of the Trump regime. Let us look at UNHRC from preliminary exam perspective.

UN HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL

- The council is the central structure in the global human rights architecture, a political body with representatives drawn from the General Assembly.
- The UNHRC replaced the UN Human Rights Commission in 2006.
- Headquarter : Geneva, Switzerland.
- The UNHRC has **47 members** serving at any time with elections held to fill up seats every year, based on allocations to regions across the world to ensure geographical representation.
    - African States: 13 seats
    - Asia-Pacific States: 13 seats
    - Latin American and Caribbean States: 8 seats
    - Western European and other States: 7 seats
    - Eastern European States: 6 seats
- There is **no special privilege for the more developed Western countries**, as is the case with other multilateral institutions such as the IMF or the World Bank.
- Countries are disallowed from occupying a seat for more than two consecutive terms.
- It passes **non-binding resolutions** on human rights issues, besides overseeing expert investigation of violations in specific countries.
- Apart from the council, the UN has also set up a number of treaty-based organisations to monitor compliance with human rights standards and international human rights treaties such as the Human Rights Committee and the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights.
- The UNHRC holds regular sessions three times a year, in March, June, and September –
    - **Universal Periodic Review**: The Universal periodic review (UPR) mechanism reviews all 192 UN member states every four years to "ensure universality of coverage and equal treatment of all Member States." It provides opportunities to member states to declare what actions they have taken to improve human rights and to fulfil their obligations.
    - **Special Procedure**: The special procedures of the Human Rights Council are independent human rights experts with mandates to report and advise on human rights from a thematic or country-specific perspective. The system of Special Procedures is a central element of the United Nations human rights machinery and covers all human rights: civil, cultural, economic, political, and social.

- **Special Rapporteur**: The titles Special Rapporteur, Independent Expert, and Working Group Member are given to individuals working on behalf of the United Nations (UN) within the scope of "special procedure" mechanisms.

The mechanism of Universal Periodic Review (UPR) was incorporated into the functioning to give teeth to the organisation. The UPR, which has a national report from the state under review plus a compilation of UN information prepared by the Office of the UN High Commission for Human Rights, also allows for a summary of information from civil society actors.

PRACTICE QUESTIONS

MCQS

1. Which of the following statements is/are correct about UN Human Rights Council?

1. Resolutions passed by it are binding on the member countries.
2. All the members of the UN are the serving members of the UNHRC.

Select the correct answer using the code given below:

a) 1 only b) 2 only
c) Both 1 and 2 d) Neither 1 nor 2

2. Which of the following has a border with the Mediterranean sea?

a) West bank b) Jordan
c) Iraq d) Gaza strip

3. Which of the following countries is/are the members of the NATO?

1. Turkey 2. USA
3. India

Select the correct answer using the codes given below:

a) 1 and 2 only b) 1 and 3 only
c) 2 and 3 only d) 1, 2 and 3

4. Which of the following share their border with Dead Sea?

1. Jordan 2. Israel
3. Lebanon

Select the correct answer using the codes given below:

a) 1 only b) 1 and 2 only
c) 2 and 3 only d) 1, 2 and 3

5. Principle of Collective defence under article 5 of the Washington treaty is related to which of the following ?

a) NATO b) UNSC
c) UNHRC d) None of the above

DESCRIPTIVE QUESTIONS

Q1. India's stand on Human rights resolutions against Sri Lanka has largely been shaped by its local politics. Analyse.

Q2. "India and China should have complimentary roles, share prosperity and be independent of each other and of the West, in the long term" . Critically Analyse.

Answers to above MCQs: *1 (d), 2 (d), 3 (a), 4(b), 5(a)*

CONSTITUTION, POLITY AND GOVERNANCE

GS PAPER (PRELIMS) & GS PAPER II (MAIN)

GUIDELINES TO MONITOR SOCIAL MEDIA, DIGITAL MEDIA & OTT PLATFORMS

#REGULATION #SOCIAL MEDIA #OTT PLATFORMS #NEWS

PRIMARY SOURCE THE HINDU SECONDARY SOURCE pib

IN NEWS

The Government has notified Information Technology (Intermediary Guidelines and Digital Media Ethics Code) Rules 2021 - to regulate social media platforms, messaging services, OTT platforms and news portals. The Rules have been framed in exercise of powers under section 87(2) of the Information Technology Act, 2000 and in supersession of the earlier Information Technology (Intermediary Guidelines) Rules 2011. The guidelines have been framed keeping in mind the difference between viewership in a theatre and television as compared to watching it on Internet as it seeks to address peoples' varied concerns while removing any misapprehension about curbing creativity and freedom of speech and expression.

THREE IMPORTANT PARTS OF THE GUIDELINES

1. ***Guidelines Related to Social Media*** to be Administered by Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology.
2. ***Digital Media Ethics Code*** Relating to Digital Media and OTT Platforms to be Administered by Ministry of Information and Broadcasting.
3. ***Establishing Three Tier Grievance Redressal Mechanism*** for news publishers and OTT Platforms and digital media.

PROLIFERATION OF SOCIAL MEDIA IN INDIA

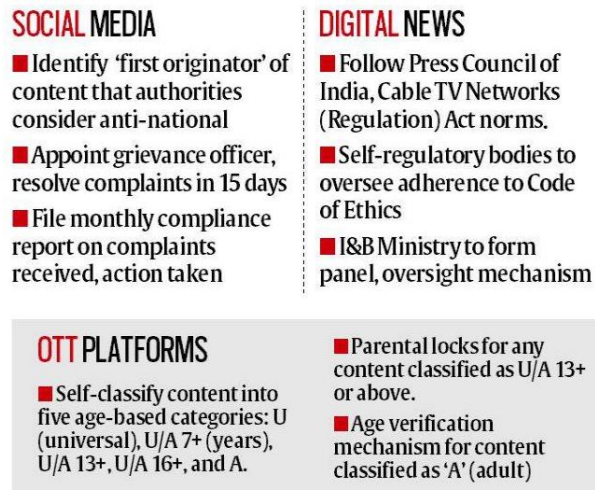
- **Extensive Spread –** India through its demography provides the domestic and international social conglomerates a thriving market. This market has been facilitated by cheaper mobile and internet prices which have resulted in extensive spread of use of social media from mobile phones. The ever growing Indian consumer base in the digital arena has allowed many social media platforms like Facebook, WhatsApp, Instagram, Amazon, Twitter, YouTube etc. to expand their digital footprints in India.
- **Show Creativity & Creates Awareness -** These social platforms have enabled common Indians to show their creativity, ask questions, be informed and freely share their views, including criticism of the Government and its functionaries. So, a sizeable number of Indian citizens operate on social media platforms.

SOCIAL MEDIA PLATFORMS	USERS IN INDIA
WhatsApp	**53 Crores**
YouTube	**44.8 Crores**
Facebook	**41 Crores**
Instagram	**21 Crores**

Twitter	**1.75 Crores**

SOURCE: PRESS INFORMATION BUREAU

- **Social Media Platforms must abide Indian laws -** Proliferation of social media, on one hand empowers the citizens and on the other hand gives rise to some serious concerns and consequences which have grown manifold in recent years. So, one can say that constitutionally there is no bar on any business organisations including social media platforms to do business and also earn profits in India. However, such organisations must be made accountable to the Constitution and laws of India in case of any wrong doings.
- **Disturbing things observed on Social Media –** Social Media is used not only to spread information and share ideas or express opinions, but also to spread fake news, run propaganda machines, settle corporate rivalries, morph images and videos of women and adolescent girls to threaten them, cause social and religious disharmony by spreading fake news or morphed images which is not true. So clearly, misuse of social media platform is on the rise.
- **New Challenges for Law Enforcement Agencies -** Over the years, the increasing instances of misuse of social media by criminals, anti-national elements have brought new challenges for law enforcement agencies. These include inducement for recruitment of terrorists, circulation of obscene content, spread of disharmony, financial frauds, incitement of violence, public order etc.
- **Government must ensure Culpability -** The question which remains is to find culpability of the persons involved in spread of such misinformation along with culpability of the social media platforms like Facebook, Instagram, WhatsApp etc. which allows spread of such fake news or information. Thus, finding the originator of such fake news becomes important and it is here where the Rules framed by the government are of much help. So, let's go through the three important parts of guidelines framed by the government to regulate social media and OTT platforms in India.


SOCIAL MEDIA
Identify 'first originator' of content that authorities consider anti-national
Appoint grievance officer, resolve complaints in 15 days
File monthly compliance report on complaints received, action taken
DIGITAL NEWS
Follow Press Council of India, Cable TV Networks (Regulation) Act norms.
Self-regulatory bodies to oversee adherence to Code of Ethics
I&B Ministry to form panel, oversight mechanism
OTT PLATFORMS
Self-classify content into five age-based categories: U (universal), U/A 7+ (years), U/A 13+, U/A 16+, and A.
Parental locks for any content classified as U/A 13+ or above.
Age verification mechanism for content classified as 'A' (adult)

GUIDELINES RELATED TO SOCIAL MEDIA TO BE ADMINISTERED BY MINISTRY OF ELECTRONICS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

- **Due Diligence to Be Followed By Intermediaries:** The Rules prescribe due diligence that must be followed by intermediaries, including social media intermediaries. In case, due diligence is not followed by the intermediary, safe harbour provisions will not apply to them.

  The term "Intermediaries" has been defined in Section 2 (w) of The Information Technology Act, 2000 - *Intermediary, with respect to any particular electronic records, means any person who on behalf of another person receives, stores or transmits that record or provides any service with respect to that record and includes telecom service providers, network service providers, internet service providers, web-hosting service providers, search engines, online payment sites, online-auction sites, online-market places and cyber cafes*
- **Establishing Grievance Redressal Mechanism:** The Rules seek to empower the users by mandating the intermediaries, including social media intermediaries, to establish a grievance redressal mechanism for receiving resolving complaints from the users or victims. Intermediaries shall appoint a Grievance Officer to deal with such complaints and share the name and contact details of such officer. Grievance Officer shall acknowledge the complaint within 24 hours and resolve it within 15 days from its receipt.
- **Ensuring Online Safety and Dignity of Users, Specially Women:** Intermediaries shall remove or

disable access within 24 hours of receipt of complaints of contents that exposes the private areas of individuals, show such individuals in full or partial nudity or in sexual act or is in the nature of impersonation including morphed images etc. Such a complaint can be filed either by the individual or by any other person on his/her behalf.

- **Two Categories of Social Media Intermediaries:** To encourage innovations and enable growth of new social media intermediaries without subjecting smaller platforms to significant compliance requirement, the Rules make a distinction between ***Social Media Intermediaries*** and ***Significant Social Media Intermediaries.*** This distinction is based on the number of users on the social media platform.
- Government is empowered to notify the threshold of user base that will distinguish between social media intermediaries and significant social media intermediaries.
- **Additional Due Diligence** to Be Followed by Significant Social Media Intermediary.
- **Appoint a Chief Compliance Officer** who shall be responsible for ensuring compliance with the Act and Rules. Such a person should be a resident in India.
- **Appoint a Nodal Contact Person** for 24x7 coordination with law enforcement agencies. Such a person shall be a resident in India.
- **Appoint a Resident Grievance Officer** who shall perform the functions mentioned under Grievance Redressal Mechanism. Such a person shall be a resident in India.
- **Publish a monthly compliance report** -mentioning the details of complaints received and action taken on the complaints as well as details of contents removed proactively by the significant social media intermediary.
- **Identifying the First Originator of Information -** ***Significant social media intermediaries*** providing services primarily in the nature of messaging shall enable identification of the first originator of the information that is required only for the purposes of prevention, detection, investigation, prosecution or punishment of an offence related *to sovereignty and integrity of India, the security of the State, friendly relations with foreign States, or public order or of incitement to an offence relating to the above or in relation with rape, sexually explicit material or child sexual abuse material punishable with imprisonment for a term of not less than five years.*
- **Intermediary shall not be required to disclose the contents of any** message or any other information to the first originator.
- **Publishing Physical Contact Address** by Significant Social Media Intermediary on its website or mobile app or both.
- **Voluntary User Verification Mechanism:** Users who wish to verify their accounts voluntarily shall be provided an appropriate mechanism to verify their accounts and provided with demonstrable and visible mark of verification.
- **Giving Users an Opportunity to Be Heard:** In cases where significant social media intermediaries remove or disables access to any information on their own accord, then a prior intimation for the same shall be communicated to the user who has shared that information with a notice explaining the grounds and reasons for such action. Users must be provided an adequate and reasonable opportunity to dispute the action taken by the intermediary.
- **Removal of Unlawful Information:** An intermediary upon receiving actual knowledge in the form of an order by a court or being notified by the Appropriate Govt. or its agencies through authorized officer should not host or publish any information which is prohibited under any law in relation to the interest of the sovereignty and integrity of India, public order, friendly relations with foreign countries etc.
- The Rules will come in effect from the date of their publication in the gazette, except for the **additional due diligence for significant social media intermediaries**, which shall **come in effect 3 months after** publication of these Rules.

DIGITAL MEDIA ETHICS CODE RELATING TO DIGITAL MEDIA AND OTT PLATFORMS TO BE ADMINISTERED BY MINISTRY OF INFORMATION AND BROADCASTING

- Regarding widespread concerns over unregulated OTT Platforms and digital media, the government received

complaints from civil society and parents requested interventions.

- So, a conscious decision was taken that issues relating to digital media and OTT and other creative programmes on Internet shall be administered by the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting but *the overall architecture shall be under the Information Technology Act*, which governs digital platforms.
- **Developing Self-Regulatory Mechanism -** After series of consultations by Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, OTT players have been urged to develop "self-regulatory mechanism".
- **The Code of Ethics for online news, OTT platforms and digital media** prescribe the guidelines to be followed.
- **Code of Ethics have been notified under Section 87 of Information Technology Act** - These Rules empower the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting to implement Part-III of the Rules which prescribe the following:

➢ **Self-Classification of Content:** The OTT platforms, called as the publishers of online curated content in the rules, would **self-classify the content into five age based categories** –

(a) U (Universal),

(b) U/A 7+,

(c) U/A 13+,

(d) U/A 16+, and

(e) A (Adult).

➢ **Parental Locks -** Platforms would be required to implement parental locks for content classified as U/A 13+ or higher, and reliable age verification mechanisms for content classified as "A".

➢ **Displaying Age Related Classification specific to each content or programme -** together with a content descriptor informing the user about the nature of the content, and advising on viewer description (if applicable) at the beginning of every programme enabling the user to make an informed decision, prior to watching the programme.

➢ **Observing Norms of Conduct by Publishers of news on digital media** - would be required to observe Norms of Journalistic Conduct of the Press Council of India and the Programme Code under the Cable Television Networks Regulation Act thereby providing a level playing field between the offline (Print, TV) and digital media.

ESTABLISHING THREE TIER GRIEVANCE REDRESSAL MECHANISM FOR NEWS PUBLISHERS AND OTT PLATFORMS AND DIGITAL MEDIA.

- **A three-level grievance redressal mechanism** has been established under the rules **with different levels of self-regulation**.

(a) **Level-I:** Self-regulation by the publishers;

(b) **Level-II:** Self-regulation by the self-regulating bodies of the publishers;

(c) **Level-III:** Oversight mechanism.

- **Self-regulation by the Publisher:** Publisher shall appoint a Grievance Redressal Officer based in India who shall be responsible for the redressal of grievances received by it. The officer shall take decision on every grievance received by it within 15 days.
- **Self-Regulatory Body:** There may be one or more self-regulatory bodies of publishers. Such a body shall be headed by a retired judge of the Supreme Court, a High Court or an Independent Eminent Person and have not more than six members.
- **Registration with Ministry of I&B -** Regulatory Bodies so constituted will have to register with the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting. This body will oversee the adherence by the publisher to the Code of Ethics and address grievances that have not be been resolved by the publisher within 15 days.
- **Oversight Mechanism:** Ministry of Information and Broadcasting shall formulate an oversight mechanism. It shall publish a charter for self-regulating bodies, including Codes of Practices. It shall establish an Inter-Departmental Committee for hearing grievances.

ISSUES WITH THE GUIDELINES

- **Rules have been framed without Parliamentary Scrutiny–** Shows Use of excessive Executive Authority
- **Guidelines Against the law on Subordinated Legislation -** The ability to issue rules under a statute

or law i.e. to frame subordinate legislation is by its nature a limited and constrained power. When the Union Government issues subordinate rules, it is to give effect or implement the substantive provisions of the law. In this case, subordinate legislation has been misused by the government and in the garb of rulemaking, government has rather come up with primary set of legislation.

- **Rules have created new term in the Parent Act -** the executive branch has created new term "significant social media intermediaries" which has not been defined in the Information Technology Act, 2000.
- **End-to-End Encryption to be broken –** Power to break end-to-end encryption has not been provided in the Information Technology Act or any other law. Instant messaging platforms which deploy end-to-end encryption that helps keep our conversations private will now effectively be broken through mere guidelines issued by the Executive.
- **Rules have added a New Chapter on Registration of Digital News Sites** before the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting. Such provisions are absent in the parent Act.

1. **More Censorship –** The guidelines represent a dangerous move by the Union Government towards increased censorship of internet content and mandating compliance with government demands regarding user data collection and policing of online services in India.
2. **Affects Creativity –** Creative content which might be bit sensitive for the audience will find difficulty to survive in the new era of censorship of OTT Platforms. This will affect business prospects of creative talent.
3. **OTT contents are now subject to cultural approval from the citizens –** Citizens have the right to complain against any OTT Content if such content hurts religious or other feelings of the citizens. This also disturbs the balance between rights of content maker and rights of audience.

1. **Limited Purview of IT Act -** Regarding digital news and media portals, the purview of the Information Technology Act, 2000, is limited. It only extends to the blocking of websites and intermediary liabilities framework but does not extend to content authors and creators.
2. **IT Act does not extend to news media** – Through the guidelines, the IT Act is being made applicable even to news media.

- **Bureaucratic Oversight will lead to more Censorship -** The Oversight Mechanism function will be played by a body that is not an autonomous regulator but one composed of high ranking bureaucrats without any independent or outside interference or accountability. This provides for the discretionary exercise of government powers of censorship over these sectors.

PRESIDENT'S RULE IN PUDUCHERRY

#PRESIDENT'S RULE #UNION TERRITORY

PRIMARY SOURCE THE HINDU SECONDARY SOURCE mint

IN NEWS

The Ministry of Home Affairs has notified President's Rule in Puducherry, days after a Congress-led government in the union territory lost power during a vote of confidence. The notification was issued after Union Cabinet approved the proposal to dissolve the Puducherry Assembly.

NOTIFICATION TO DISSOLVE THE ASSEMBLY WAS SIGNED BY THE PRESIDENT

- President of India approved a proposal to dissolve the Puducherry Assembly and impose President's Rule in the Union Territory as per **Section 51 of the Government of Union Territories Act, 1963.**
- The report highlighted that the President after receiving report and other information was satisfied that a situation had arisen in which the administration of the Union Territory of Puducherry could not carry on in accordance with the provisions of the Government of Union Territories Act, 1963.
- Therefore, in exercise of the powers conferred by section 51 of the Act and of all other powers enabling

the President, he suspended the Legislative Assembly of Puducherry.

- Power of President to suspend the Legislative Assembly of Puducherry comes from **Article 239** of the Constitution of India which empowers the President to administer the Union Territory of Puducherry.
- **Article 239 - Administration of Union territories**

(1) Save as otherwise provided by Parliament by law, every Union territory shall be administered by the President acting, to such extent as he thinks fit, through an administrator to be appointed by him with such designation as he may specify.

(2) Notwithstanding anything contained in Part VI (THE STATES), the President may appoint the Governor of a State as the administrator of an adjoining Union territory, and where a Governor is so appointed*, he shall exercise his functions as such administrator independently of his Council of Ministers.*

- **Article 239A - Creation of local Legislatures or Council of Ministers or both for certain Union territories**
- Constitution (Fourteenth Amendment) Act, 1962 added Article 239A to the Indian Constitution which provides that Parliament may by law create Legislature having Council of Ministers for the UT of Puducherry.
- Accordingly, Parliament enacted **the Government of Union Territories Act, 1963** to provide for Legislative Assemblies and Councils of Ministers for certain Union territories (apart from UT of National Capital Territory of Delhi).
  - **The Government of Union Territories Act, 1963 – Important Provisions**
- ***Section 44 of the 1963 Act – Council of Minister –*** There shall be a Council of Ministers in each Union territory with the Chief Minister at the head to aid and advise the Administrator in the exercise of his functions who shall act in his/her discretion only in so far as any "special responsibilities" were concerned.
- **Section 51 - Provision in case of failure of constitutional machinery -** If the President, on receipt of a report from the Administrator of the Union territory or otherwise, is satisfied:

(a) That a situation has arisen in which the administration of the Union territory cannot be carried on in accordance with the provisions of this Act, or

(b) That for the proper administration of the Union territory it is necessary or expedient so to do,

the President then may, by order, suspend the operation of all or any of the provisions of this Act for such period as he thinks fit and make such incidental and consequential provisions which may appear necessary or expedient for administering the Union territory in accordance with the provisions of **Article 239.**

Thus, the term **"or otherwise"** provided in Section 51 regarding power of the President means that he can impose President's rule in the Union Territory even without Administrator's recommendation on the advice of Council of Ministers.

- **Article 356 is applicable only for States and NOT for Union Territory**

- **For National Capital Territory of Delhi –** Constitutional Failure is dealt as per Article 239AB which was added by the Constitution (Sixty-ninth Amendment) Act, 1991.
- **For UT of Puducherry –** Section 51 of THE GOVERNMENT OF UNION TERRITORIES ACT, 1963 provides for application of President's Rule in case of failure of constitutional machinery as per Article 239 of the Constitution of India.

RELATED INFORMATION: ARTICLE 356 - PROVISIONS IN CASE OF FAILURE OF CONSTITUTIONAL MACHINERY IN STATES

a) Grounds: If the President on receipt of report from Governor of a state or otherwise is satisfied that a situation has arisen in which the Government of the State **cannot be carried on in accordance with Constitutional Provisions**, the President may assume to himself.

- All or any of the functions of the Government of the State.
- All or any of the powers vested in or exercisable by the Governor.

- Declare that the powers of the Legislature of the State shall be exercisable by or under the authority of Parliament.
- President may suspend in whole or in part the operation of any provisions of the Constitution relating to anybody or authority in the State.

  However, the President cannot assume to himself powers of High Court or suspend in whole or in part the operation of any provision of the Constitution relating to High Courts under Article 356.
- **Approval:** Every such proclamation shall be laid before each House of Parliament – (both LS & RS)**.** Such proclamation needs to be approved within 2 months by each House of Parliament by simple majority.
- **Tenure:** The proclamation once approved shall be in force for a period of 6 months. The life of proclamation can be extended for further 6 months if both Houses approve its continuance by passing it. Maximum time for which such a proclamation remains in force is for 3 years.
- **Effect:** State Legislature ceases to function as it is either dissolved or is kept in suspended animation.
- **Constitution 44th Amendment:** As per Constitution 44th Amendment, the following conditions must be fulfilled for proclamation under Article 356 to be carried **beyond 1 year**
- Proclamation for emergency under **Article 352** must be in operation in the whole of India, or the concerned State or in part of the State.
- Election Commission certifies that continuation in force of proclamation under Article 356 is necessary on account of holding elections to the concerned Legislative Assembly.

IMPORTANCE OF ARTICLE 365 - EFFECT OF FAILURE TO COMPLY WITH, OR TO GIVE EFFECT TO, DIRECTIONS GIVEN BY THE UNION

- Where any State has failed to comply with, or to give effect to, any directions given in the exercise of the executive power of the Union under any of the provisions of this Constitution, it shall be lawful for the President to hold that a situation has arisen in which the Government of the State cannot be carried on in accordance with the provisions of this Constitution.
- Thus, Article 365 provides the reason for imposing Article 356 in any states.
- Supreme Court in ***S.R. Bommai judgment*** held that the dissolution of State Assembly is not an automatic outcome of every proclamation under Article 356. The dissolution of the Assembly prior to the approval of the Proclamation under Article 356(3) shall be invalid.

ELECTION IN STATES

#ELECTION #STATE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

PRIMARY SOURCE THE HINDU SECONDARY SOURCE The Indian EXPRESS

SECONDARY SOURCE pib

IN NEWS

The Election Commission of India (ECI) has announced Assembly elections in the States of Tamil Nadu, Kerala, West Bengal and Assam and the Union Territory of Puducherry. The ECI also announced by-elections to two Lok Sabha constituencies — Malappuram in Kerala and Kaniyakumari in Tamil Nadu. Chief Election Commissioner announced that Model Code of Conduct (MCC) shall be applicable with immediate effect after the announcement of assemble elections for these states and Union Territory. Election Commission also announced that NRIs will not get the facility of postal ballot. Constitution of India has empowered Election Commission to conduct peaceful elections in the state. Let us learn some important points about conduct of elections in India.

- **Duration of State Legislative Assembly – 5 Years: Article 172** provides for duration of State Legislatures which shall be for a period of five years unless sooner dissolved. It further says that expiration of the period of five years shall operate as dissolution of the Assembly automatically. **Important Point** – The period of 5 years for a Legislative Assembly was substituted for a period of 6 years by Constitution 42nd Amendment. However, Constitution 44th Amendment changed the duration back to 5 years.

- **Can duration of Legislative Assembly be extended?** As per Article 172, duration of legislative assembly can be extended beyond 5 years while a Proclamation of Emergency under Article 352 is in operation. The duration of State Legislative Assembly (SLA) can be extended by Parliament by law for a period not exceeding one year at a time and not extending in any case beyond a period of six months after the Proclamation has ceased to operate.
- **What about Legislative Council? According to Article 172 (2) -** the Legislative Council of a State shall not be subject to dissolution, but as nearly as possible one-third of the members thereof shall retire on the expiration of every second year in accordance with the provisions made in that behalf by Parliament by law.

Article 173 - Qualification for membership of the State Legislature: A person shall not be qualified to be chosen to fill a seat in the Legislature of a State unless he—

- is a citizen of India, and makes and subscribes before some person authorised in that behalf by the Election Commission an oath or affirmation according to the form set out for the purpose in the Third Schedule.
- is, in the case of a seat in the Legislative Assembly, not less than 25 years of age and, in the case of a seat in the Legislative Council, not less than 30 years of age. &
- possesses such other qualifications as may be prescribed in that behalf by or under any law made by Parliament.

ELECTION COMMISSION – CONDUCT OF ELECTIONS

- **The Election Commission of India** is an independent Constitutional Authority since 25th January, 1950. The Constitution provides for Chief Election Commissioner and one or more Election Commissioners to be appointed.
- **Composition:** Currently, the Commission has a Chief Election Commissioner and two Commissioners.
- **Status -** Chief Election Commissioner and the Election Commissioners enjoy the status of a Judge of the Supreme Court of India.
- **Removal -** The Chief Election Commissioner shall not be removed from his office except in like manner and on the like grounds as a Judge of the Supreme Court and the conditions of service of the Chief Election Commissioner shall not be varied to his disadvantage after his appointment. Whereas any other Election Commissioner or a Regional Commissioner shall not be removed from office except on the recommendation of the Chief Election Commissioner.
- **Power of Election Commission -** The Election Commission shall have the superintendence, direction and control of the preparation of the electoral rolls for, and the conduct of, all elections to Parliament and to the Legislature of every State and of elections to the offices of President and Vice-President held under this Constitution.
- **Decisions by Consensus -** The Commission decides most matters by consensus but in case of any dissension, the majority view prevails.
- **Officers at state and lower levels -** At the state level, a Chief Electoral Officer with a core staff of varying numbers, is available on a full time basis. At the district and constituency level, officers and staff of the civil administration double up as election officials. During actual conduct of elections, a vast number of additional staff are temporarily deployed and they function mainly as polling and counting officials.
- **Election as per Adult Suffrage -** As per Article 326, *elections to the House of the People and to the Legislative Assembly of every State shall be on the basis of adult suffrage* i.e. every person who is a citizen of India and who is not less than 18 years of age on a particular date fixed by the Commission, shall be entitled to vote.
- **Voting Age -** Earlier, prior to March 1989 the voting age was 21 and was subsequently reduced to 18 years by the Constitution (Sixty-first Amendment) Act, 1988.
- **Right to Vote -** The right to vote is irrespective of caste, creed, religion or but subject to voting age of 18 years. However, as per Article 326, *a citizen will be disqualified to vote* if -

- He/she is disqualified under the Constitution or
- He/she is disqualified under any law on grounds of non-residence, unsoundness of mind, crime or corrupt or illegal practice.

- **Level playing field & Equal Opportunity –** Election Commission helps in conducting free and fair elections which forms the bed rock of democracy. This envisages a level playing field for the contestants and an equal opportunity for all parties for presenting their policies and programmes to voters.
- **Model Code of Conduct (MCC) provides level playing field** – MCC intends to provide a level playing field for all political parties, keep the campaign fair and healthy, avoid clashes and conflicts between parties, and ensure peace and order. It aims to ensure that the ruling party, either at the Centre or in the States, does not misuse its official position to gain an unfair advantage in an election. This instrument is a major contribution of Indian electoral system to the cause of democracy.

MODEL CODE OF CONDUCT - PURPOSE

- **Provides Guidance for Political Parties –** MCC is a set of norms which has been evolved with the consensus of political parties who have consented to abide by the principles embodied in the said code and also binds them to respect and observe it in its letter and spirit.
- The salient features of the Model Code of Conduct lay down how political parties, contesting candidates and party(s) in power should conduct themselves during the process of elections i.e. on their general conduct during electioneering, holding meetings and processions, poll day activities and functioning of the party in power etc.

EVOLUTION OF MCC

- **1960 -** MCC originated and evolved with the consensus of the political parties. The origin of the MCC dates back to 1960 when the MCC started as a *small set of Dos and Don'ts for the Assembly election in Kerala* in 1960.
- **1962 -** The Code covered conducting of election meetings/processions, speeches, slogans, posters and placards. In 1962 Lok Sabha General Elections, the Commission circulated this code to all the recognized political parties and the State Governments were requested to secure the acceptance of the Code by the Parties.
- **1967 Onwards -** Report received after the 1962 general election showed that the Code was followed by and large. This made the Election Commission follow the code from 1967 in the Lok Sabha and Assembly elections.
- **In 1968** - the Election Commission held meetings with political parties at State level and circulated the Code of Conduct to observe minimum standard of behaviour to ensure free and fair elections.
- **In 1979** - Election Commission, in consultation with the political parties further amplified the code, adding a new Section placing restrictions on the "Party in power" so as to prevent cases of abuse of position of power to get undue advantage over other parties and candidates.
- **In 1991 -** the code was consolidated and re-issued in its present form. The present code contains guidelines for general conduct of political parties and candidates eg:
  - *no attack on private life,*
  - *no appeal to communal feelings,*
  - *discipline and decorum in meetings, processions,*
  - *guidelines for party in power – official machinery and facilities not to be used for electioneering,*
  - *prohibition against Ministers and other authorities in announcing grants, new schemes etc.*

➢ **Is MCC Legally Enforceable?**

➢ **No Statutory Backing -** Model Code of Conduct does not have a statutory backing and hence cannot be enforced legally.

➢ **Mere set of Guidelines** - Has been agreed by all parties as a model to be obeyed during the conduct of elections.

➢ **Certain provisions of MCC may be enforced -** through invoking corresponding provisions in other statutes such as the Indian Penal Code, 1860, Code of Criminal Procedure, 1973, and Representation of the People Act, 1951.

➢ **Election Commission & former Election Commissioners not in favour of making MCC legally enforceable –** as according to EC, it will delay cases pertaining to elections resulting in delay in the

conduct of elections. If cases are filed with respect to ongoing elections, then it will delay the entire process as litigants will resort to appeals in High Courts and Supreme Court.

- The Election Commission ensures observance of MCC by political parties in power, including ruling parties at the Centre and in the States and contesting candidates in the discharge of its constitutional duties for conducting the free, fair and peaceful elections to the Parliament and the State Legislatures under Article 324 of the Constitution of India. It also ensures that official machinery for the electoral purposes is not misused.
- Further, it is also ensured that electoral offences, malpractices and corrupt practices such as impersonation, bribing and inducement of voters, threat and intimidation to the voters are prevented by all means.

APPLICABILITY OF MCC

- In the case of *Union of India v Harbans Sigh Jalal and Others,* Supreme Court ruled that Code of Conduct would ***come into force the moment the Election Commission issues the press release***, which precedes the notification by a good two weeks.
- This ruling ended the controversy related to the dates of enforcement of MCC. *Thus, the MCC remains in force from the date of announcement of elections till the completion of* **elections***.*
- **Lok Sabha -** During general **elections** to House of People, the code is applicable throughout the country.
- **Vidhan Sabha -** During general elections to the Legislative Assembly (Vidhan Sabha), the **code** is applicable in the entire State.
- **During by-elections**, the code is applicable in the entire district or districts in which the constituency falls.

Part of MCC	Subject for guidance of political candidates & candidates
Part 1	General Conduct
Part 2	Meetings
Part 3	Procession
Part 4	Polling Day
Part 5	Polling Booth
Part 6	Observers
Part 7	Party in Power
Part 8	Guidelines on Election Manifestos

TAMIL NADU PROPOSE MODIFICATIONS IN SCHEDULE CASTES' LISTS

#SC LIST #RESERVATION

PRIMARY SOURCE THE HINDU SECONDARY SOURCE The Indian EXPRESS

IN NEWS

A bill to modify the list of scheduled castes in Tamil Nadu was introduced in Lok Sabha. THE CONSTITUTION (SCHEDULED CASTES) ORDER (AMENDMENT) BILL 2021 seeks to give effect to a long-standing political demand to group seven Scheduled Caste sub-sects in Tamil Nadu under the heritage name 'Devendrakula Velalar' (DKV).

Purpose of the Bill: The State Government of Tamil Nadu has proposed certain modifications in the list of Scheduled Castes, by way of grouping of seven castes, which presently exist therein as separate castes in the said list. In order to give effect to the above changes, it is necessary to amend the Constitution (Scheduled Castes) Order, 1950 in respect of the State of Tamil Nadu.

The Constitution (Scheduled Castes) Order, 1950 : The Constitution (Scheduled Castes) Order, 1950 has been constituted under Article 341(1) and provides for names of Scheduled Castes for different states.

ARTICLE 341 - PRESIDENTIAL ORDER FOR SC

- With respect to State and Union Territories, the President after consulting with the Governor, through public notification specify the castes, races or tribes or parts of or groups within castes, races or tribes which

shall for the purposes of this Constitution be deemed to be Scheduled Castes in relation to that State or Union territory.

- **Under Article 341(2)** of the Indian Constitution, Parliament is empowered to confer status of Scheduled Caste notified through a Presidential List. So, to amend the Presidential List of Scheduled Caste, an amendment must be made in The Constitution (Scheduled Castes) Order, 1950.
- **For Union Territories** – Parliament has enacted THE CONSTITUTION (SCHEDULED CASTES) [(UNION TERRITORIES)] ORDER 1951.

PRESIDENTIAL ORDER FOR ST - ARTICLE 342

- With respect to State and Union Territories, the President after consulting with the Governor, through public notification specify the tribes or tribal communities or parts of or groups within tribes or tribal communities which shall for the purposes of this Constitution be deemed to be Scheduled Tribes in relation to that State or Union territory.
- Similarly under Article 342(2), Parliament is empowered to confer status of Scheduled Tribe notified through a Presidential List.
- Accordingly, Parliament has enacted The Constitution (Scheduled Tribes) Order, 1950 which provides for list of Scheduled Tribes for different states.
- **For Union Territories** – Parliament has enacted THE CONSTITUTION (SCHEDULED TRIBES) [(UNION TERRITORIES)] ORDER, 1951.

HUMAN RIGHTS

#HUMAN RIGHTS #DEMOCRACY

PRIMARY SOURCE THE HINDU | SECONDARY SOURCE The Indian EXPRESS

IN NEWS

A democracy which does not ensure and secure universal rights for all is a democracy only in name. So, no government has immunity because it violates human rights in its jurisdiction and no country can claim violation of human rights as its internal affairs including India. The Article highlights that in a real democracy, government cannot intimidate or threaten those who have a different view from the government in power. So, in this backdrop, let us understand why violation of human rights and democratic rights cannot be India's internal affairs.

SUPPORT AGAINST APARTHEID IN SOUTH AFRICA

- India itself played an important role in drawing the world together to oppose the apartheid government of South Africa. India in its opposition went beyond the sovereignty shield used by the South African government to continue oppressing the Black population.
- India stayed firm from the 1950s till a resolution was adopted and a United Nations Special Committee Against Apartheid was set up by the United Nations.
- India's work, in consistently creating awareness and resistance against the demonisation of Nelson Mandela via the Rivonia trial in 1963, checked the Apartheid regime from awarding him the death sentence.

ADOPTING THE UNIVERSAL DECLARATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS AND UN CHARTER

- **Member of First Human Rights Commission -** India was a member of the first Human Rights Commission, which was to draft the 'International Bill of Rights'.
- **India ratified UDHR -** The Universal Declaration of Human Rights was drafted from January 1947 till December 10, 1948, when it was eventually adopted by the General Assembly. It was the same time when Constituent Assembly was drafting India's Constitution.
- **India supports UN Charter** - As a founding member of the United Nations, India strongly supported the purposes and principles of the UN Charter, its policies and programmes.
- **CA Debates -** India at UN and even in Constituent Assembly Debates conveyed its strong support for freedom from oppression for all human beings.
- Dr. Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan famously said while commending the Objectives Resolution to the Assembly, that the endeavour was "a fundamental alteration in the structure of Indian society to abolish

every vestige of despotism, every heirloom of inorganic tradition."

- **Article 15 & Article 17 –** India abolished any form of discrimination and untouchability and also legislated The Protection of Civil Rights Act 1955 and Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes Prevention of Atrocities Act.

- **Inspiration from French Revolution**

- **The triad of 'Liberty, Equality and Fraternity'** engraved in the Preamble, drew significantly from the slogan used influentially in the French Revolution.
- **Ridiculing Graded Inequality -** Dr. B.R. Ambedkar also ridiculed the grip of "graded inequality" of the caste system and said that all three elements - Liberty, Equality and Fraternity – together were absolutely essential if Indians were to realise their full potential.
- **Importance of Liberty, Equality & Fraternity -** B.R. Ambedkar on the eve of the adoption of the Preamble explained how Liberty, Equality and Fraternity were connected and locked into each other firmly: *"Without equality, liberty would produce the supremacy of the few over the many. Equality without liberty would kill individual initiative. Without fraternity, liberty would produce the supremacy of the few over the many. Without fraternity, liberty and equality could not become a natural course of things. It would require a constable to enforce them."*

- **Instances where India interfered with other country's internal matters**

- **Even through CAA, India offered home for certain persecuted citizens of three foreign countries** which tantamount to interfering with Pakistan's, Afghanistan's and Bangladesh's internal affairs.
- **Independence of Bangladesh** also can be said to be meddling in Erstwhile East Pakistan's internal affairs. But the decision was taken based on gross violation of human rights, trampling of democratic rights and weakening the enemy for India's strength.
- **Hosting Dalai Lama –** showcases India's commitment to human rights.
- **Offering Guided tour of Jammu & Kashmir's to a delegation of far-right European Parliament members** before allowing Indian MPs to visit the area where the erstwhile state was in lockdown for months. This signals that India does worry about its international reputation on the lockdown imposed on the valley by the government.

Conclusion: Thus, global concerns about democratic rights in India cannot be dealt with by arresting messengers, bullying 'amplifiers' or shutting down social media accounts. By adopting UDHR and UN Charter, India must confirm to its important principles on human rights.

INTER-STATE BOUNDARY DISPUTES

#COOPERATIVE FEDERALISM #STATE BOUNDARY DISPUTES

PRIMARY SOURCE THE HINDU SECONDARY SOURCE The Indian EXPRESS

IN NEWS

Andhra Pradesh has conducted panchayat elections in three villages in the Kotia cluster, which is at the centre of a border dispute between Andhra Pradesh and Odisha. Based on this, Union Petroleum Minister has said that it was a matter of concern that a State had conducted panchayat elections inside another State's geographical boundary. He further stated that the interstate-State boundary dispute is creating bad blood among disputing states.

About the region: These villages, with a population of nearly 5,000, are located on a remote hilltop on the inter-state border and are inhabited by Kondh tribals. The region, once a Maoist hotbed which still reports sporadic incidents of violence, is also rich in mineral resources like gold, platinum, manganese, bauxite, graphite and limestone.

HISTORICAL DISPUTE

- **1936 - In the Constitution of Orrisa Order, 1936,** published in the Gazette of India in March 1936, the Government of India demarcated Odisha from the erstwhile Madras Presidency. The then Madras Presidency included the present Andhra Pradesh.

- **In 1942 - the Madras government contested the boundary** and ordered re-demarcation of the two states. In a joint survey of Odisha, Bihar and Madhya Pradesh, seven villages of Kotia gram panchayat were recorded as revenue villages and revenue was collected by the Odisha government, but the exercise left out the 21 villages now under dispute.
- **1955 – Villages not surveyed -** When the state of Andhra Pradesh was created in 1955, the villages were not surveyed by the Andhra Pradesh government either. Hence, the area remained disputed and undemarcated.
- **1980s - Odisha filed a case in the Supreme Court** demanding right and possession of jurisdiction over the 21 villages.
- **2006 – Matter to be resolved by Parliament -** Supreme Court ruled that since disputes belonging to the state boundaries are not within the jurisdiction of the Supreme Court, the matter can only be resolved by Parliament and passed a permanent injunction on the disputed area.

ARTICLE 3 - IT SAYS THAT PARLIAMENT MAY BY LAW

- form a new State (or UT) by separation of territory from any State or by uniting two or more States (or UT) or parts of States or by uniting any territory to a part of any State (or UT);
- increase the area of any State;
- diminish the area of any State;
- alter the boundaries of any State;
- alter the name of any State.

2021 – Problems due to Panchayat Elections - A day after Andhra notified the panchayat elections for the disputed area, Odisha Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik inaugurated projects worth Rs 18 crores in the area. The Odisha government moved the Supreme Court, which posted the matter for hearing on February 19, 2021.

LOK SABHA & ASSEMBLY ELECTIONS IN THE AREA

- The problem is further compounded as in Assembly and Lok Sabha elections the villages participate in Assembly and Lok Sabha elections for both states.
- They are registered as voters for Salur Assembly and Araku Lok Sabha seats of Andhra, and Pottangi Assembly and Koraput Lok Sabha seats of Odisha.
- Even the villagers enjoy benefits from both states under various schemes.
- So, the question remains whether the border dispute can be solved through any mechanism provided under the constitution or through any extra-constitutional or extra-judicial mechanism.
- These aspects were covered by the National Commission to Review the Working of the Constitution. As per the National Commission to Review the Working of the Constitution, the Constitution of India contemplates a variety of mechanisms for the settlement of inter-State disputes. Taking the word "dispute" in a wide and comprehensive sense, so as to cover not only disputes that come up before the judiciary, but also disputes for whose resolution an extra-judicial machinery is contemplated by the Constitution.

Judicial Mechanism – Article 131: The principal provision creating the judicial mechanism for dealing with inter-State disputes involving a legal right is **Article 131** of the Constitution. It confers, on the Supreme Court of India, exclusive jurisdiction to deal with disputes involving legal rights. This article covers any dispute

1. between the Government of India and one or more States; or
2. between the Government of India and any State or States on one side and one or more other States on the other; or
3. between two or more States

INTER-STATE COUNCIL – ARTICLE 263

- Under Article 263 of the Constitution, there is provision for the formation of an inter-State Council. Although this Council has several functions, it is also competent to tender advice regarding the resolution of inter-State disputes including boundary disputes.
- One of the functions to be discharged by the Council contemplated by the article is that of inquiring into and advising upon disputes which may have arisen between States.

- Article 263 appears under the sub-head: **States "Co-ordination between States** reads as under:

Article 263 - Provisions with respect to an inter-State Council: If at any time it appears to the President that the public interests would be served by the establishment of a Council charged with the duty of

(a) inquiring into and advising upon disputes which may have arisen between States;

(b) investigating and discussing subjects in which some or all of the States, or the Union and one or more of the States, have a common interest; or

(c) making recommendations upon any such subject and, in particular, recommendations for the better co-ordination of policy and action with respect to that subject.

It shall be lawful for the President by order to establish such a Council, and to define the nature of the duties to be performed by it and its organization and procedure.

Government accepted Sarkaria Commission Report: The Commission on Centre-State Relations under the Chairmanship of Justice R. S. Sarkaria in its report in January 1988 recommended that:

- ✓ *A permanent Inter-State Council called the Inter-Governmental Council (IGC) should be set up under Article 263.*
- ✓ *The IGC should be charged with the duties set out in clauses (b) and (c) of Article 263, other than socio-economic planning and development.*

- **Government of India accepted the recommendations of the Sarkaria Commission** to set-up an Inter-State Council and notified the establishment of the Inter-State Council vides Presidential Order dated 28-05-1990.
- **Government also established an Inter-State Council Secretariat in 1991** headed by a Secretary to the Government of India, assisted by two Advisers in the rank of Additional Secretary to the Government of India, two Directors and three officers each in the rank of Deputy Secretary and Under Secretary.
- **Composition of the Inter-State Council:** The Council consists of
  - Prime Minister – Chairperson
  - Chief Ministers of all States – Members
  - Chief Ministers of Union Territories having a Legislative Assembly and Administrators of UTs not having a Legislative Assembly – Members
  - Six Ministers of Cabinet rank in the Union Council of Ministers to be nominated by the Prime Minister – Members

The Presidential Order of 1990 has been amended twice providing for Governor of a State under President's rule to attend the meeting of the Council and nomination by the Chairman of permanent invitees from amongst the other Union Ministers, respectively.

Vision & Mission - Inter-Council Secretariat: The Inter-State Council Secretariat acts as a vibrant organization to support Centre-State and Inter-State coordination and cooperation in India. Thus, the mission is to

- Create a strong institutional framework to promote and support cooperative federalism in the country.
- Activate the Inter-State Council and Zonal Councils by organizing its regular meetings.
- Facilitate consideration of all pending and emerging issues of Centre State and Inter-State relations by the Zonal Councils and Inter- State Council.
- Develop a sound system of monitoring the implementation of the recommendations of the Inter-State Council and Zonal Councils.

Functions of the Inter-State Council

- **Making recommendations** upon such subject and in particular for better coordination of policy and action regarding any issue or subject matter.
- **Inquiring into and advising upon disputes** which may have arisen between/among States.
- **Investigating and discussing subjects** in which some or all of the States, or the Union and one or more of the States have a common interest.
- **Deliberating upon** other matters of general interest to the states as may be referred by the Chairman.

Standing Committee: In the second meeting of the Inter-State Council held on 15.10.1996, the Council decided to set up a Standing Committee for continuous consultation and processing of matters for

consideration of the Council. Accordingly, a Standing Committee was set up under the Chairmanship of the Home Minister vide notification dated 5 December 1996.

Functions of Standing Committee - The Standing Committee will

- Have continuous consultation and process matters for consideration of the Council.
- Process all matters pertaining to Centre-State Relations before they are taken up for consideration in the Inter-State Council.
- Monitor the implementation of decisions taken on the recommendations of the Council. &
- Consider any other matter referred to it by the Chairman/Council.

The Standing Committee may, if necessary, invite experts and persons eminent in specific fields to have the benefit of their views while deliberating upon the related subjects.

Conclusion: In this case, the boundary disputes between Andhra Pradesh and Odisha can be solved by

- **Judicial Pronouncement** under Article 131 of the Constitution of India.
- **By the Inter-State Council** through the recommendations of its Standing Committee.
- **The Parliament under Article 3.** Parliament can alter boundary and this will permanently help in settling the border dispute between the two states.

MORE NATIONAL CAPITALS & SC BENCHES

#GOVERNANCE

PRIMARY SOURCE THE HINDU SECONDARY SOURCE The Indian EXPRESS

CONTEXT

This article explores the possibilities of two aspects: 1. Having Four National Capitals 2. Having more Benches of Supreme Court in India. Let us understand about the benefits and challenges for each of these two proposals.

HAVING FOUR NATIONAL CAPITALS

The idea of having four Capitals where sessions of Parliament can be held on rotation was suggested by Bengal CM in a rally. The idea even though seems practical, but implementing such an idea comes with heavy cost to the exchequer. **The problems in having four capitals are:**

- **Selecting four Capital** of Northern, Southern, Western and Eastern regions.
- **Construction cost** to build 3 more Parliament and residential houses for the MPs.
- **Travelling Cost of MPs** for different sessions of Parliament.
- **Providing security to all the MPs** will be a huge burden for the State Police.
- **Delhi preferred Choice -** Most of the MPs from the northern and central India would prefer to stay in New Delhi.
- **Guarding of Vacant Properties -** Even the vacant accommodations where the MPs don't reside will have to be guarded round the clock.
- **High Profile Ministers** who get upgraded security needed to be guarded all the time at all the places.
- **Traffic Mess -** This will not only be additional cost to the exchequer but will also result in traffic mess once they start moving in different parts of the country when Parliament is in Session.

HAVING MORE BENCHES FOR SUPREME COURT

- **Demand for Southern Bench of SC -** A similar request was made in January 2021 when the Bar Councils of the five southern States called for a Supreme Court bench in south India.
- **Court of Appeal -** While speaking at an online event last year, Attorney General K.K. Venugopal suggested that four benches of Court of Appeal with 15 judges each be created across the country to reduce the burden of the Supreme Court.
- **Amendment in the Constitution -** This would enable judges to go through each case thoroughly and deliver a well-thought-out verdict. Setting up these courts would call for an amendment in the Constitution.

THE IDEA OF CASSATION BENCH - EXAMPLE OF FRANCE

- **Different Constitution Court & Court of Appeals -** Many countries have constitutional courts as well as final courts of appeal called Courts of Cassation ***(Cour de Cassation in French)*** for adjudication of non-constitutional matters. A court of cassation is the judicial court of last resort and has power to quash or reverse decisions of the inferior courts.
- **A Court of Cassation** is a high-instance court that exists in some judicial systems. Courts of cassation do not re-examine the facts of a case, they only interpret the relevant law. The Court of Cassation is the highest court in the French judiciary.
- **Civil, commercial, social or criminal cases** are first ruled upon by courts of first instance or lower courts, commercial courts and industrial or labour courts.

95TH LAW COMMISSION REPORT

- **Tenth Law Commission of India, 95th Report titled "Constitutional Division within the Supreme Court –** A proposal for", under Justice K. K. Mathew recommended that the Supreme Court of India should consist of two Divisions, namely

  (a) Constitutional Division, and (b) Legal Division and that only matters of Constitutional law may be assigned to the proposed Constitutional Division.
- **Constitutional Amendment -** To effect the recommendation, a constitutional amendment must be necessary to create Constitutional Division and Legal Division of Supreme Court.

125TH LAW COMMISSION REPORT

- **"The Supreme Court – A Fresh Look"** under the chairmanship of Justice D A Desai (125th Report, 1988) following the previous report recommended for splitting the Supreme Court into the two abovementioned Constitutional and Legal divisions.
- **Costly to Travel to Delhi -** The report also highlighted the high cost of litigation with respect to travelling to Delhi specially from far away areas of the country such as South India.
- **Constitutional Court & Court of Appeal -** Considering the cost analysis, Eleventh Law Commission suggested to split Supreme Court into Constitutional Court and Court of Appeal or a Federal Court of Appeal which will sit in Benches in places *North, South, East, West and Central India.*
- **Rising Case Arrears -** The Report highlighted that there is a rising arrears of cases in Supreme Court and this has also resulted in rise in litigation costs for most of persons involved in such dispute who stay in far flung areas.
- **Increasing Cost of Litigation -** Bringing one's own lawyer who has handled the matter in the High Court adds to the cost of litigation. Thus, there is wastage of time, effort and money just to hear a case in Supreme Court which is located in Delhi.

229TH LAW COMMISSION REPORT

- **Setting up Constitution Bench -** Under Justice A R Lakshmanan, the Report recommended that "a Constitution Bench be set up at Delhi to deal with constitutional and other allied issues", and "Four Cassation Benches be set up in the

  ✓ ***Northern region/zone at Delhi,***

  ✓ ***Southern region/zone at Chennai/Hyderabad,***

  ✓ ***Eastern region/zone at Kolkata and***

  ✓ ***Western region/zone at Mumbai***

  to deal with all appellate work arising out of the orders/judgments of the High Courts of the particular region.
- **Speedy Justice -** The Commission also referred various Reports of the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Law and Justice which has repeatedly suggested that in order to promote speedy justice available to the common man, benches of the Supreme Court have to be established in the Southern, Western and North-Eastern parts of the country.
- **Territorial Jurisdiction -** The 229th Report has also suggested territorial jurisdiction of each of these Cassation Benches of Supreme Court to be constituted under **Article 130** of the Indian Constitution.
- **Article 130 - Seat of Supreme Court -** The Supreme Court shall sit in Delhi or in such other place or places, as the Chief Justice of India may, with the approval of the President, from time to time, appoint.

BENEFITS OF CASSATION BENCH

- **Reduce Backlog of Cases** - Supreme Court will be relieved of the backlog of accumulated cases which are causing a burden and continuous strain on the resources of the apex court.
- **Supreme Court would be free to deal with only constitutional cases** such as interpretation of the Constitution, matters of national importance and other references made by the zonal benches to larger benches due to conflict of authority or any other reason.
- **Benches can be set up** under the Supreme Court Rules 1966 without much delay as it is under the preview of Supreme Court of India.
- **Cassation Benches will reduce cost of litigation** and reduce time taken to dispose of cases.
- **Cassation bench will also lead to increase in strength of number of Judges** in the higher judiciary. This will lead to more recruitment of judges in the higher judiciary.
- **All India Judicial Service** as prescribed under Article 312 of the Indian Constitution will have greater chance of coming into effect as there would be greater need of more Judges at higher judiciary.

UT STATUS FOR J&K TEMPORARY

#UNION TERRITORY #STATE

PRIMARY SOURCE THE HINDU | SECONDARY SOURCE The Indian EXPRESS

IN NEWS

The Home Minister told the Lok Sabha that the government would restore full statehood to Jammu and Kashmir at an appropriate time when situations become congenial. The Home Minister was replying to a discussion on the Jammu and Kashmir Reorganisation (Amendment) Bill, 2021, in the Lok Sabha.

About the J&K Reorganisation Bill: The J&K Reorganisation (Amendment) Bill seeks to merge the all-India services J&K cadre with the Arunachal Pradesh, Goa, Mizoram Union Territory (AGMUT) cadre. He said the region's Union Territory status is temporary just like Article 370 granting special status to Jammu and Kashmir was supposed to be.

CONSTITUTIONAL PROCESS TO CREATE STATE/UNION TERRITORIES

- **Part I of the Constitution of India** provides for formation of new States and Union Territories and alteration of areas, boundaries or names of existing States or Union Territories.
- **Reading Down Article 370 -** So, once the government abolished (read down) **Article 370** of the Indian Constitution which gave Jammu and Kashmir special status, the state became like any other normal state.
- **The division of the state into two Union Territories** of Jammu and Kashmir and Ladakh was done under **Article 3**.
- **Article 3 empowers the Parliament to**
  - Form new states or Union Territories
  - Alter areas, boundaries or names of existing states or Union Territories
- Parliament accordingly introduced the THE JAMMU AND KASHMIR REORGANISATION ACT, 2019.

So, first of all let us understand the important provisions of Article 3

- Now, regarding Article 3, the first thing to understand is about the Explanation-I and Explanation-II provided thereunder which we generally miss.

Explanation I - In this article -- in clauses (a) to (e) -- "State" includes a ***Union territory, --*** but in the proviso -- "State" does not include a Union territory.

Explanation II - The power conferred on Parliament by clause (a) includes the **power to form a new State or Union territory** by uniting a part of any State or Union territory to any other State or Union territory. (This case is applicable for J&K to be divided into two UTs.)

So, after understanding the Explanations, let us go through the Provisions of Article 3: It says that Parliament may by law –

(a) form a new State (or UT) by separation of territory from any State or by uniting two or more States (or

UT) or parts of States or by uniting any territory to a part of any State (or UT)

(b) increase the area of any State;

(c) diminish the area of any State;

(d) alter the boundaries of any State;

(e) alter the name of any State;

Proviso Clause – (Here State does not include Union Territory)

- The Bill to be introduced for reorganisation of states, recommendation of the President is necessary.
- Where proposals contained in the Bill affect the areas, boundaries, or name of any of the States, the Bill must be referred by the President to the Legislature of that State for expressing its views within a prescribed timeframe.

Article 2 - Parliament may by law admit into the Union, or establish, new States on such terms and conditions as it thinks fit.

Article 4 - Laws made under articles 2 and 3 to provide for the amendment of the First and the Fourth Schedules and supplemental, incidental and consequential matters. No such law as aforesaid shall be deemed to be an amendment of this Constitution for the purposes of article 368.

DELHI ASSEMBLY'S COMMITTEE SUMMONS FACEBOOK'S V.P.

#COMMITTEE #PRIVILEGES

PRIMARY SOURCE THE HINDU | SECONDARY SOURCE The Indian EXPRESS

IN NEWS

The Delhi Legislative Assembly's Committee on Peace and Harmony had summoned Ajit Mohan, Vice-President and Managing Director of Facebook India to depose before the committee over alleged inaction to tackle harmful content on its platform. The committee among other things was also probing role or complicity of Facebook officials in Delhi Riots. Supreme Court has reserved its judgment on the matter.

DID FACEBOOK REPRESENTATIVE APPEAR?

- **Challenged Delhi's Summon before SC -** Ajit Mohan challenged the summons of Delhi Legislative Assembly before the Supreme Court and stated that Delhi LA had no power.
- **Arguments of Facebook India Vice President** -He told the Supreme Court (on 24 February, 2021) that the Delhi Assembly has no legislative power to set up a panel to examine the issue of peace and harmony in connection with Delhi Riots.
- **Solicitor General backed Facebook's Claim Against Delhi Government -** Solicitor General Tushar Mehta, representing the Centre argued that "law and order" is in Centre's domain and Delhi Legislative Assembly does not have power to issue summon on the matter of Delhi Riots.
- Supreme Court has reserved its judgment on the matter.

Implications of the Litigation: The litigation that may have far-reaching implications on centre-state relations, the *separation of powers, fundamental rights and Parliamentary Privileges* as provided under Article 105 and 194 in the Constitution.

1. Parliamentary Privileges

- **More Liberty -** Members of Parliament and State Legislatures are given more liberty and freedom of speech during its proceedings as compared to a normal citizen. Such special privilege helps them in discharging their duty independently and effectively without any fear from outside interference.
- **Constitutional Protection -** Constitution of India under Article 105 and 194 provides for powers, privileges and immunities of Parliament and State Legislature and their corresponding members.
- **Public and Order cannot be equated with Peace and Harmony -** The Lawyer for Delhi Assembly said that public order and police cannot be equated with peace and harmony. The police comes at the last stage if the scene becomes unmanageable.

2. Doctrine of Pith and Substance

- **Pith** denotes the 'essence of something' or the 'true nature', while **substance** states 'the most significant or essential part of something'. Hence, it can be stated that the very doctrine of pith and substance relates to finding out the true nature of any law.
- **Seventh Schedule -** Constitution of India under Article 246 distributes law making power through Seventh Schedule under UNION LIST, STATE LIST & CONCURRENT LIST. Now, at times the power under various entries of SEVENTH SCHEDULE overlaps and the Judiciary applies the principle of PITH AND SUBSTANCE to demarcate and find out the competence or incompetence of state legislatures to frame law on any subject matter.
- However, the Doctrine of PITH AND SUBSTANCE should not apply pre-emptively at the ENQUIRY STAGE when discussions may or may not lead to legislations.

3. Impact on Co-operative Federalism

- **Co-operative Federalism enhances Centre-state relations -** Indian Constitution provides for co-operative federalism to enhance Centre-State relations. However, different political parties in the centre and states or UT having legislative assembly at times disturbs the federal harmony because of their respective political ambitions.
- **Confrontation will not help the cause of federalism** - It will become difficult for Union and the States to cooperate if they are barred from even discussing or taking evidence on issues beyond their limited legislative competence.

4. Judicial Review – Legislative Proceedings

- **Judiciary barred from enquiring into matters of Legislative Assembly -** Constitution of India under **Article 194(2)** prohibits Judiciary from enquiring into any proceedings in respect of anything said or any vote given by a member in the Assembly or with respect to any Committee.
- **Against Judicial Review -** So, no theory of judicial review would justify such a deep dive into the legislative competence of Committee formed by Delhi LA as it is expressly barred by the Indian Constitution under Article 194(2).

  Article 194(2) - *No member of the Legislature of a State shall be liable to any proceedings in any court in respect of anything said or any vote given by him in the Legislature or any committee thereof, and no person shall be so liable in respect of the publication by or under the authority of a House of such a Legislature of any report, paper, votes or proceedings.*

Importance of Free Speech in Parliament & State Legislature

- **In 1399**, the Commons recognised free speech in the House as a tradition by reversing the judgment of treason on **Sir Thomas Haxey**. It is this ancient privilege that found its way into our Constitution under Article 105 and 194.
- **It is a landmark of liberty** as it allows elected representatives to challenge the most powerful people of the land on behalf of commoners. This ancient tradition would be effaced if the court were to appoint itself an arbiter of legislative discussions.

Problem of Codification of Parliamentary Privileges

- **Parliament has yet not codified privileges** available to members inspite of its mentioning in the constitution under Article 105(3) and 194(3).
- **Misuse of Privileges -** This has led to misuse of certain privileges accorded to the members of Parliament and State Legislatures. Privilege motions are misused in India to fulfill political ambitions. Such actions need to be avoided by the office bearers.
- **India mostly follows British conventions** with respect to privileges enjoyed by the House and its members. Since independence, the jurisprudence on privilege has evolved and various important case laws have shown the pathway.

WAY FORWARD

- Parliamentary democracy functions on the pillars of freedom of speech and criticism. Every government should profit by the criticism faced by it during its tenure as such criticisms helps in streamlining and improving the quality and effectiveness of governance.
- **Need to Codify Parliamentary Privileges -** Thus, there is a stringent need to codify privileges, powers and immunities of the House. It will provide proper guidelines to be followed and remove uncertainties

which currently prevail. In a democracy free speech and rule of law should be the norm, not the exception.

- **Justice Subba Rao in Searchlight case** strongly pleaded for codification of privileges instead of following conventions. The framers of the constitution felt that privileges of the House must not be framed in hurry but should be allowed to grow and nurture with time and then legislated.
- Time has come to codify the privileges, powers and immunities as it will not only provide a proper road map to be followed but shall also be a safeguard against any misuse of powers, privileges and immunities.
- Let us wait for the final verdict of Supreme Court to know whether Peace and Harmony Committee set up by Delhi Government had jurisdiction to call Vice-President of Facebook to enquire into Facebook's complicity in the Delhi riots.

LAND TITLING CHALLENGES

#LAND TITLE #GOVERNANCE

PRIMARY SOURCE THE HINDU SECONDARY SOURCE The Indian EXPRESS

IN NEWS

The Centre wants to reform the country's land markets through a fundamental legal and procedural shift in how land titles are awarded. In 2020, even as laws for farm reform and labour code reform were being enacted, the government's think tank, NITI Aayog, took steps to initiate land reforms. A Model Bill on Conclusive Land Titling was sent to States and Union Territories last June seeking their comments. In September, after many States failed to send in their feedback, the Centre warned that their agreement would be presumed.

IMPORTANT HIGHLIGHTS

- The NITI Aayog has released a draft model Act and rules for states on conclusive land titling with an aim to reduce litigations and ease the land acquisition process for infrastructure projects.
- The model Act and rules will provide state governments power to order for establishment, administration and management of a system of title registration of immovable properties.
- The aim of the draft model Act is to reduce a large number of land related litigations and also improve land acquisitions for the infrastructure projects.
- Under the model Act, the land dispute resolution officer and land title appellate tribunal are one-shot institutions which will fade away as the work reduces.
- After three years of its notification, the register of title attains conclusivity without any external action.
- Conclusive land titles are guaranteed by the state for correctness and entail provision for compensation by the state in case of any dispute.
- According to the draft Act, any person aggrieved by an entry in the Record of Titles notified under Section 11 may file an objection before the Title Registration Officer within three years from the date of such notification.
- **Existing land administration in India**
- The system of land records was inherited from the Zamindari system. The legal framework in India does not provide for guaranteed ownership, and the manner in which information pertaining to land records is collected and maintained further exacerbates the gaps in these records.
- This has resulted in a system, where generally **ownership is established based on who is in current possession of the land**. Such possession is determined through a sequence of past transactions of the land or property in question.
- **Registered Sale Deed -** In India, land ownership is primarily established through a registered sale deed (a record of the property transaction between the buyer and seller). Other documents used to establish ownership include: -
- the record of rights (document with details of the property),
- property tax receipts, and
- survey documents.

- **Documents acts as Record -** However, these documents are not a government guaranteed title to the property, but only a record of the transfer of property.
- During such transactions, the onus of checking past ownership records of a property is on the buyer. Therefore, ***land ownership in India, as determined by such sale deeds, is presumptive in nature, and subject to challenge***.
- Land records are a combination of three types of data records:

✓ Textual Data

✓ Spatial Maps and

✓ Transaction details (Sale Deeds)

- **Problem Lies with Multiple Agencies having Jurisdiction over Land Records -** Three different state departments are responsible for each of this data on land records. Thus, in the presence of multiple agencies responsible for registration and maintenance of records, it is difficult to ensure that survey maps, textual data, and registration records match with each other and are updated.
- **Harassment for Buyers -** In addition, citizens have to approach several agencies to get complete information on land records. Most of these departments work in silos, and updating of records by any one of them makes the records of the others outdated. Online updation of land records is still not in practice in different states.

India currently follows a system of presumptive land titling:

- Land records are maintained, with information on possession, which is determined through details of **past transactions**.
- ***Ownership, then, is established on the basis of current possession***.
- Registration of land is actually a registration of transactions, such as **sale deeds**, **records of inheritance**, **mortgage and lease**.
- Holding registration papers does not actually involve the government or the legal framework guaranteeing the ownership title of the land.
- Apart from sale deeds Record of rights and **property tax receipt** are also indicators of land ownerships.
- Rightful land ownership must also be reflected in the **surveys** that determines the land boundaries of a state.

○ **Moving from Presumptive Land Titling to Conclusive Land Titling**

- **Discrepancies often Noted in Land Records -** Land records consist of various types of information (property maps, sale deeds) and are maintained across different departments at the district or village level. These departments work in silos, and the data across departments is not updated properly. Hence, discrepancies are often noted in land records.
- **The Committee on Financial Sector Reforms (FSRC) in 2009** - recommended moving from a presumptive to a conclusive titling system.
- **Conclusive titles are state guaranteed titles** - where the state guarantees the title for its correctness and provides for compensation in case of any disputes.
- Under a ***conclusive land titling system (NITI Aayog recommended a shift to conclusive titling in a 2017 report)***, land records designate actual ownership.

BENEFITS OF CONCLUSIVE LAND TITLING

- **The title is granted by the government** which takes the responsibility for accuracy.
- **Disputes to be settled with government, not the title holder -** Once a title is granted, any other claimant will have to settle disputes with the government, not the title holder.
- **No danger of losing ownership -** Further, under conclusive land titling, the government may provide compensation to claimants in case of disputes, but the title holder is not in any danger of losing ownership.
- **Reduce Land related litigation -** According to a 2007 World Bank study on 'Land Policies for growth and poverty reduction', land-related disputes accounted for two-thirds of all pending court cases in India. A NITI Aayog study on strengthening arbitration estimated that disputes on land or real estate take an average time of 20 years in the courts to be resolved.

- **Ambiguity in Ownership for lack of transaction Records -** Right now, because land titles are based on transactions, people have to keep the entire chain of transaction records, and a dispute on any link in that chain causes ambiguity in ownership.
- **Easier for Investors to purchase Land -** Once conclusive titling is in place, investors who want to purchase land for business activities will be able to do so without facing the constant risk that their ownership may be questioned and their entire investment may go to waste.
- **It will promote an active land market.**
- **Improve Efficiency -** Land disputes and unclear titling also create hurdles for infrastructure development and housing construction, leading to costly delays and inefficiency. Conclusive Land Titling will improve efficiency and reduce delays.
- **Ensure Government of their Legitimate House Property Tax in Urban Areas -** In cities, urban local bodies depend on property taxes that can be levied properly only if there is clear ownership data available. Ambiguity in ownership also results in a black market for land transactions, which deprives the government of taxes. Clear land titles will reduce ambiguities and improve tax collection for the government.
- **Improve Access to Credit in Rural Areas -** Access to agricultural credit is dependent on the ability to use land as collateral. Without being able to prove their ownership of land and access formal credit from banks, small and marginal farmers are often left at the mercy of unscrupulous moneylenders, entrenching themselves in a mountain of debt.
- **The Standing Committee on Finance (2015) examining the Benami Transactions Prohibition (Amendment) Bill, 2015** noted that generation of black money through benami transactions could be pre-empted and eliminated by digitisation of land records and their regular updation.
- **What does the model Bill propose?**

- The Bill circulated by the NITI Aayog in 2020 calls for Land Authorities to be set up by each State government, which will appoint a **Title Registration Officer (TRO)** to prepare and publish a draft list of land titles based on existing records and documents. This will be considered a valid notice to all potential claimants interested in the property, who will have to file their claims or objections within a set period of time.
- If disputing claims are received, the TRO will verify all the relevant documents and refer the case to a **Land Dispute Resolution Officer (LDRO)** for resolution.
- However, ***disputes which are already pending in courts cannot be resolved in this way***.
- Having considered and resolved all the disputed claims, the Land Authority will publish a **Record of Titles.** Over a three-year period, these titles and the decisions of the TRO and the LDRO can be challenged before **Land Titling Appellate Tribunals**, which will be set up under the law.
- After a three-year period, entries in the **Record of Titles will be considered conclusive proof of ownership**.
- **Further appeals can only be taken up in High Courts**.

What are the difficulties? The Ministry of Rural Development started a land records digitisation and modernisation scheme, the National Land Records Modernisation Programme (NLRMP), in 2008, which seeks to move to a conclusive system of titles. The scheme has been renamed as ***Digital India Land Records Modernisation Programme.*** While moving to a conclusive land titling system is desirable, it poses several challenges.

- **No Updation of Land Records -** The biggest challenge is that land records have not been updated for decades, especially in rural and semi-urban areas. Land records are often in the name of the grandparents of the current owner, with no proof of inheritance. Unless they are based on updated records, conclusive land titles could create even more problems.
- **Village Maps are very old prepared during British times -** The Committee on State Agrarian Relations and the Unfinished Task of Land Reforms (2009) observed that the average age of village/cadastral maps in most states is more than 50 years, and most of them were prepared during the British regime.

- **Comprehensive village-level surveys with community involvement** are a necessary precursor to the land titling process.
- **Relying on current records or even satellite imagery will not provide the same accuracy** as actual, on-the-ground, local surveys.
- **Lack of Resource at Local Level -** Local governments have not been provided with the resources or manpower to conduct such surveys.
- **Conduct of Land Survey -** If surveys are not conducted, the onus falls on village claimants, many of whom have no access to documentation, to proactively challenge the titling during the three-year period.

WAY FORWARD

- **Use of technology** - Authorities have initiated the progress of applying Blockchain in multiple sectors. Government of Andhra Pradesh has started an initiative to maintain the land registry records. The Govt. has partnered with a Sweden start-up firm to work on maintaining the records of the land registry by Blockchain.
- **Blockchain in the land registry helps in maintaining Land Records which will be difficult to forge -** Once the land transfer task completes, the information automatically updates and saved on that blockchain platform, and this process is the safest and tamper-free mode of the operating system. No one can change the legal right of the ownership, and no one can damage the data asset. Others cannot make a change in that transaction and ownership. The history of past transfers of ownership uses to help in verifying the current legal owner of the land.
- **Integration of land records data** - The Report of the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Commerce on Ease of Doing Business (2015) had recommended integration of land records in a database.
- **Property identification code**- FSRC (2009) had recommended the creation of a unique property identification code by linking city survey numbers to municipal bodies so that all data in the context of a particular property is available online.

DEFAMATION LAW IN INDIA

#DEFAMATION #SEXUAL HARASSMENT

PRIMARY SOURCE THE HINDU SECONDARY SOURCE The Indian EXPRESS

IN NEWS

Priya Ramani, a journalist had alleged sexual harassment by the then Minister of State, in the Ministry of External Affairs Mr. M.J. Akbar in one of her tweets. Mr. Akbar had to resign in October, 2018 and then filed a criminal complaint for defamation against Ms. Ramani for her article and her tweets where she had alleged sexual harassment. Delhi High Court has now acquitted the journalist and underscored that most women do not speak about harassment for the social stigma attached to it.

IMPORTANCE OF ACQUITTAL OF PRIYA RAMANI

- The acquittal of Priya Ramani, a journalist, on a complaint of criminal defamation by former Union Minister M.J. Akbar has come as a vindication to a long line of women who have not been taken seriously earlier when they have alleged sexual harassment.
- Many an allegation has often remained unvoiced for fear of ridicule, shaming, or on grounds of sheer financial necessity.
- There have also been those who feel that anything short of rape or outraging a woman's modesty is not actionable. That long silence has now been broken by the important verdict.
- Delhi High Court held that **right of the reputation cannot be protected at the cost of the right of a woman's reputation guaranteed under Article 21.**

1. About Defamation

- Defamation is the general term for a legal claim involving injury to one's reputation caused by a false statement of fact and includes both libel (defamation in written or fixed form) and slander (spoken defamation). The crux of a defamation claim is falsity.
- Truthful statements that harm another's reputation will not create liability for defamation (although they

may open you up to other forms of liability if the information you publish is of a personal or highly private nature).

- Defamation refers to the act of publication of defamatory content that lowers the reputation of an individual or an entity when observed through the perspective of an ordinary man. ***If defamation occurs in spoken words or gestures (or other such transitory form) then it is termed as slander and the same if in written or printed form is libel.*** Defamation in India is **both a civil and a criminal offence**.
- **Defamation is an exception to the Right to Freedom of Speech under Article 19(2)** – Freedom of speech and expression are curtailed by reasonable restrictions provided under Article 19(2). Defamation has been listed as one of the exceptions to Article 19(1)(a).

  Defamation defined under Indian Penal Code: Section 499 of Indian Penal Code explains Defamation whereby it has also provided certain exceptions.

- *Whoever, by words either spoken or intended to be read, or by signs or by visible representations, makes or publishes any imputation concerning any person intending to harm, or knowing or having reason to believe that such imputation will harm, the reputation of such person, is said, except in the cases hereinafter excepted, to defame that person.*
- **So the main ingredients of defamation include – *intending to harm the reputation of another person. This can be done orally, through visible representation or even publication.***
- Now, let us go through these **10 Exceptions** as provided for Defamation under Section 499 of IPC. **So these activities will not amount to defamation as per Section 499 of IPC:**

1. **Imputation of truth which public good requires to be made or published** — It is not defamation to impute (represent) anything which is true concerning any person, if it be for the public good that the imputation should be made or published. Whether or not it is for the public good is a question of fact. (The aspect of Public Good is always open to judicial review)
2. **Public conduct of public servants** — It is not defamation to express in good faith any opinion whatever respecting the conduct of a public servant in the discharge of his public functions, or respecting his character, so far as his character appears in that conduct, and no further.
3. **Conduct of any person touching any public question** — It is not defamation to express in good faith any opinion whatever respecting the conduct of any person touching any public question, and respecting his character, so far as his character appears in that conduct, and no further.
4. **Publication of reports of proceedings of courts** — It is not defamation to publish substantially true report of the proceedings of a Court of Justice, or of the result of any such proceedings.
5. **Merits of case decided in Court or conduct of witnesses and others concerned** — It is not defamation to express in good faith any opinion whatever respecting the merits of any case, civil or criminal, which has been decided by a Court of Justice, or respecting the conduct of any person as a party, witness or agent, in any such case, or respecting the character of such person, as far as his character appears in that conduct, and no further.
6. **Merits of public performance** — It is not defamation to express in good faith any opinion respecting the merits of any performance which its author has submitted to the judgment of the public, or respecting the character of the author so far as his character appears in such performance, and no further.
7. **Censure passed in good faith by person having lawful authority over another** — It is not defamation in a person having over another any authority, either conferred by law or arising out of a lawful contract made with that other, to pass in good faith any censure on the conduct of that other in matters to which such lawful authority relates.

   Illustration - A Judge censuring in good faith the conduct of a witness, or of an officer of the Court; a head of a department censuring in good faith those who are under his orders, a parent censuring in good faith a child in the presence of other children; a schoolmaster, whose authority is derived from a

parent, censuring in good faith a pupil in the presence of other pupils; a master censuring a servant in good faith for remissness in service; a banker censuring in good faith the cashier of his bank for the conduct of such cashier as such cashier- are within this exception.

8. **Accusation preferred in good faith to authorised person** — It is not defamation to prefer in good faith an accusation against any person to any of those who have lawful authority over that person with respect to the subject-matter of accusation.
9. **Imputation made in good faith by person for protection of his or other's interests —** It is not defamation to make an imputation on the character of another provided that the imputation be made in good faith for the protection of the interests of the person making it, or of any other person, or for the public good.

   Illustration -

- A, a shopkeeper, says to B, who manages his business—"Sell nothing to Z unless he pays you ready money, for I have no opinion of his honesty." A is within the exception, if he has made this imputation on Z in good faith for the protection of his own interests.
- A, a Magistrate, in making a report to his own superior officer, casts an imputation on the character of Z. Here, if the imputation is made in good faith, and for the public good, A is within the exception.

10. **Caution intended for good of person to whom conveyed or for public good** — It is not defamation to convey a caution, in good faith, to one person against another, provided that such caution be intended for the good of the person to whom it is conveyed, or of some person in whom that person is interested, or for the public good.

Section 500 of IPC - Punishment for defamation: Whoever defames another shall be punished with simple imprisonment for a term which may extend to 2 years, or with fine, or with both.

SHALL DEFAMATION STAY AS CRIMINAL OFFENCE?

- **Arguments in Favour**
  - **Reputational Loss impacts dignity and incur financial and societal loss –** Freedom of speech must be balanced and not misused or use carelessly so as to destroy reputation of any person of high esteem. It results in loss of dignity and at times also incurs financial loss to the person and his/her associated business.
  - **Anonymity provided by Internet protects the person destroying reputation without significant proof -** Since there is no mechanism to censor the Internet from within, online defamation could only be adequately countered by retaining defamation as a criminal offence. It acts as deterrence.
  - **Article 21 -** Criminalization of defamation is part of the state's "compelling interest" to protect the right to dignity and good reputation of its citizens.
  - **Changes have been made from time to time -** Sections 499 have 10 exceptions. These exceptions clearly exclude from its ambit any speech that is truthful, made in good faith and/or is for public good. So, the law protects freedom of speech and expression made in good faith without any bad intention.
- **Arguments Against**
  - **Against the global trend** - Many countries worldwide are in favor of treating defamation as a civil wrong, not as a criminal offence. Also, in 2011, the Human Rights Committee of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights called upon states to abolish criminal defamation, noting that it intimidates citizens and makes them shy away from exposing wrongdoing.
  - **Misuse by "Influential"** - The misuse of law as an instrument of harassment is also pervasive in India. Often, the prosecutor's complaint is taken at face value by courts, which send out routine notices for the appearance of defendants without any preliminary examination whether the offending comments or reports come under one of the exceptions spelt out in Section 499.
  - **Thus, the process itself becomes the punishment -** Criminal defamation has a pernicious effect on society: for instance, the state uses it as a means to coerce the media and political opponents into adopting self-censorship and unwarranted self-

restraint. The law can also be used by groups or sections claiming to have been hurt or insulted and abuse the process by initiating multiple proceedings in different places.

- **Public order concerns taken care by other sections** - Defamatory acts that may harm public order are covered by Sections 124A, 153 and 153A, and so criminal defamation does not serve any overarching public interest. Even though Section 499 provides safeguards by means of exceptions, the threat of criminal prosecution is in itself unreasonable and excessive.

Section IPC	Purpose
124A	Sedition
153	Wantonly giving provocation with intent to cause riot
153A	Promoting enmity between different groups on ground of religion, race, place of birth, residence, language, etc., and doing acts prejudicial to maintenance of harmony

CHANGES IN JUVENILE JUSTICE ACT

#JUVENILE #LEGISLATION

PRIMARY SOURCE THE HINDU SECONDARY SOURCE pib

IN NEWS

The Union Cabinet, chaired by the Prime Minister has approved the proposal of the Ministry of Women and Child Development to amend the Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act, 2015 to introduce measures for strengthening Child Protection set-up to ensure best interest of children.

- The amendments include authorizing District Magistrate including Additional District Magistrate to issue adoption orders under Section 61 of the JJ Act, in order to ensure speedy disposal of cases and enhance accountability.
- The District Magistrates have been further empowered under the Act, to ensure its smooth implementation, as well as garner synergized efforts in favour of children in distress conditions.
- Defining eligibility parameters for appointment of CWC members, and categorizing previously undefined offences as 'serious offence' are some of the other aspects of the proposal.
- Several difficulties faced in implementation of various provisions of the Act have also been addressed.

PRACTICE QUESTIONS

MCQS

Q1. Consider the following statements:

1. Guidelines Related to Social Media will be administered by Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology.
2. Digital Media Ethics Code Relating to Digital Media and OTT Platforms will be administered by Ministry of Information and Broadcasting.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

(a) 1 only (b) 2 only

(c) Both 1 and 2 (d) Neither 1 nor 2

Q2. Consider the following statements about President's rule in Puducherry.

1. President of India has imposed President's rule in Puducherry in accordance with Article 356 of the Constitution of India.
2. President of India approved a proposal to dissolve the Puducherry Assembly and impose President's Rule in the Union Territory as per Section 51 of the Government of Union Territories Act, 1963.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

(a) 1 only (b) 2 only
(c) Both 1 and 2 (d) Neither 1 nor 2

Q3. Constitution of India provides for which of the following?

1. Failure of Constitutional Machinery for National Capital Territory of Delhi.
2. Provision for 5 Member Election Commission of India.
3. President appointing permanent Finance Commission like UPSC.

Select the correct answer using the code given below:

(a) 2 and 3 only (b) 1 and 2 only
(c) 3 only (d) 1 only

Q4. Constitution of India specifically provides for which of the following?

1. Solving Boundary disputes by Inter-State Council.
2. Adjudication of disputes relating to waters of inter-State rivers or river valleys.

Select the correct answer using the code given below:

(a) 1 only (b) 2 only
(c) Both 1 and 2 (d) Neither 1 nor 2

Q5. Consider the following statements about defamation:

1. Defamation in India is a criminal offence.
2. Defamation is an exception to freedom of speech and expression under Article 19(2).

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

(a) 1 only (b) 2 only
(c) Both 1 and 2 (d) Neither 1 nor 2

DESCRIPTIVE QUESTIONS

Q1. There is a thin line of difference between freedom of speech and expression, defamation and sedition. Discuss. (10 Marks)

Q2. Critically analyse the recent social media guidelines issued by the Government of India to regulate digital media including OTT platforms in India. (15 Marks)

Answers: *1-c, 2-b, 3-d, 4-b, 5-c*

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ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

GS PAPER (PRELIMS) & GS PAPER III (MAIN)

LEAD ARTICLE

UHC: PROSPECTS, CHALLENGES AND STRATEGIES

#GOVERNMENT POLICIES

PRIMARY SOURCE FINANCIAL EXPRESS | SECONDARY SOURCE BusinessLine | SECONDARY SOURCE THE HINDU | SECONDARY SOURCE The Indian EXPRESS

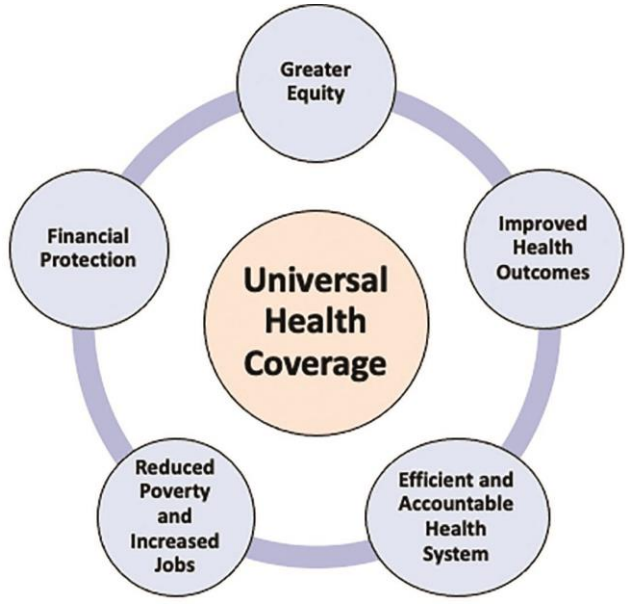
IN NEWS

The recent COVID-19 pandemic has underscored the importance of Healthcare system in a country and its key linkages to other sectors. It has clearly highlighted that a healthcare crisis can transform into an economic and social crisis.

Having recognized this important linkage, in the Union Budget 2021-22, the Finance Minister has substantially increased the healthcare expenditure by almost 137% in comparison to previous financial year. A new centrally sponsored scheme known as "PM Aatma Nirbhar Swasth Bharat Yojana" has also been launched. Keeping in mind the importance of Healthcare sector from the perspective of UPSC exam, we will focus on the following dimensions:

1. ***Universal Health Coverage- Definition and Significance***
2. ***Problems in Healthcare system***
3. ***Union Budget 2021-22 Announcements for Healthcare sector***
4. ***Critical Analysis of Ayushman Bharat Scheme***
5. ***Strategies to ensure Universal Health Coverage.***

DEFINING UNIVERSAL HEALTH COVERAGE (UHC)



- UHC can be defined as ensuring **equitable access** for all Indian citizens quality health care which encompasses **promotive, preventive, curative and rehabilitative care**.
- It should be based upon **4 A's - Availability, Accessibility, Affordability and Accountability**. The Universal Health coverage should be provided by both Government and Private sector. In order to facilitate the private sector to provide UHC, the Government should act as an enabler and facilitator.

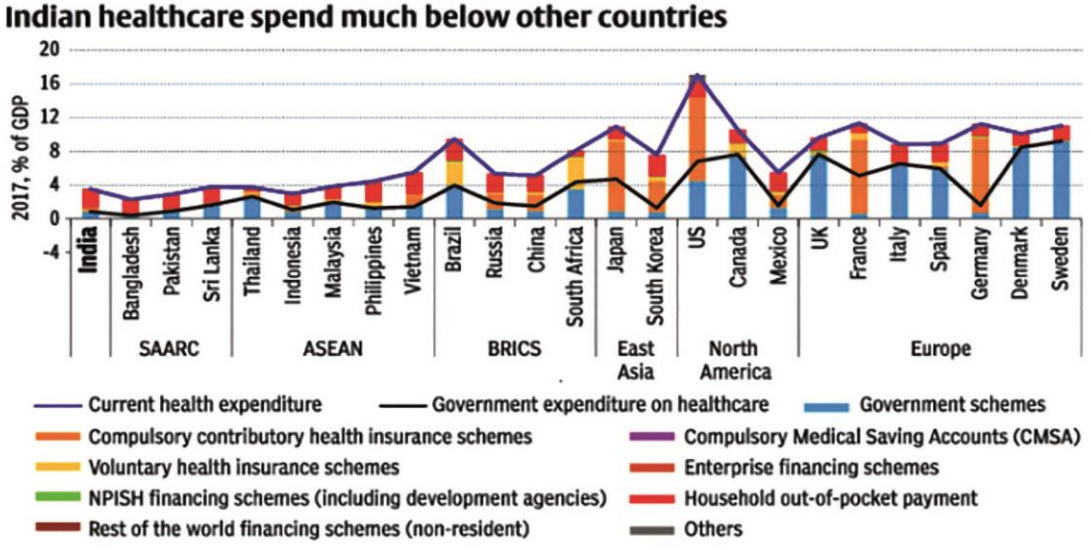
SIGNIFICANCE OF UHC IN INDIA

- Enables us to meet Sustainable Development Goals *(SDG 3.8- Universal Health Coverage, SDG 1- Ending Poverty in all forms etc)*
- Enables the people to have access to healthcare without suffering financial hardship.

- Prevents the people from slipping back to below the Poverty line.
- Enhances the Human Capital Formation and reaps demographic dividend.

PROBLEMS IN ENSURING UHC IN INDIA

- **Lower Expenditure on Health:** The Combined expenditure of Centre and States on Health is around 1.5% of India's GDP, which translates into Rs 3 per person per day. It is much below the target of 2.5% as set under the National Health Policy, 2017. Countries such as Bhutan (2.5%) and Sri Lanka (1.6%) spend more money on health as compared to us.



- **Low Insurance Penetration:** 86% of people in rural areas and 82% in urban areas do not have access to insurance coverage. Problems- Forced to use their meagre savings, borrow money, or delay the treatment.
- **Implications:**

a. Perpetuate vicious cycle of poverty (poor people remain poor due to higher health costs);

b. Push the above poverty line people back to BPL. (Drives 55 million Indians into poverty, more than the population of South Korea (51.1 million))

- **Out-of-pocket expenditure on Health:** In case of India, Government spends only 35% of healthcare expenditure, while the major chunk 65% of expenditure is incurred by people themselves. At the global level, the average out-of-pocket expenditure is hardly around 18%.
- **Lack of Accessibility:** Most of the secondary and tertiary care hospitals are located in Tier-1 and Tier-2 Cities. Similarly, most of the doctors are unwilling to practice in rural areas.
- **Lack of Affordability:** The contribution of private sector in healthcare expenditure in India is around 80 percent while the rest 20 percent is contributed by Public Sector. The private sector also provides for 58 percent of the hospitals and 81 percent of the doctors in India. However, since the private sector hospitals work on the profit motive and charge high fees, the private sector hospitals do not address the needs of the poor patients.
- **Shortage of Medical Personnel:**

Country	No. of Qualified doctors per 1000 People	No. of nurses per 1000 People
China	18	23
Italy	41	59
India	3.4	3.2

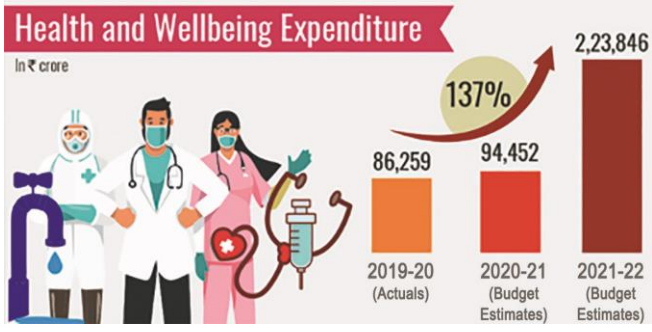
- **Poor Healthcare Infrastructure**

Country	No. of Hospital beds per 1 lakh	No. of ICU beds per 1 lakh
China	420	3.6
Italy	340	12.5

India	70	2.3

UNION BUDGET 2021-22 ANNOUNCEMENTS

The main focus of this year's budget has been on enhancing Healthcare expenditure due to COVID-19 pandemic.



PM ATMA NIRBHAR SWASTH BHARAT YOJANA

It is a new Central Sponsored Scheme. Focus of the Scheme:

- Develop capacities of primary, secondary and tertiary health care systems,
- Strengthen existing national institutions such as National Centre for Disease Control (NCDC) and create new institutions such as National Institution for one Health.
- Cater to detection and cure of new and emerging diseases.

Critical Analysis of Ayushman Bharat Scheme

- **Details about the scheme:** Ayushman Bharat seeks to provide for Universal Health Coverage (UHC) by adopting two approaches (a) Creation of 1.5 lakh Health and Wellness centres (HWCs) and Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana (PM-JAY). The PM-JAY aims at providing a health insurance cover of Rs. 5 lakhs per family per year for secondary and tertiary care hospitalization.
- **Coverage:** 50 crore people who belong to bottom 40% of India's population. Beneficiaries are identified through socio-economic caste census (SECC).

Achievements: The Economic Survey 2020-21 has highlighted the achievements of PM-JAY by taking into account two important aspects:

- PM-JAY was implemented in 2018. Hence, health indicators measured by National Family Health Surveys 4 (in 2015-16) and 5 (in 2019-20) can be compared to understand the impact of this scheme.
- Some of the states such as West Bengal, Odisha, Telangana etc. are not implementing the PM-JAY scheme. Hence, to analyse the impact of PM-JAY scheme, the health outcomes in these states can be compared with rest of India.

Benefits:

- **Improvement in Health Insurance:** The proportion of households covered under health insurance increased by 54 per cent from NFHS 4 to NFHS 5 in the states that adopted PMJAY. However, it decreased by 10 per cent in the states that did not adopt PMJAY.
- **Improvement in Health Outcomes** (such as IMR, MMR, Access to Family Planning, Institutional births etc) in the states that have adopted PMJAY.

CONCERNS AND CHALLENGES

- **Low package rates:** The government has published the rates that insurance companies would pay hospitals for around 1500 procedures covered under the scheme. These rates have become a sticking point for hospitals, which have criticised them as arbitrary and low. For example, the price of Caesarean section, at Rs 9,000 for five days of hospital stay, food and consultation. Implications- Reduce the quality of healthcare or make it unviable for private hospitals.
- **Frauds:** Under the scheme, though the card is issued to the head of the family, any number of family members may be enrolled to avail benefits under the programme. As such, people who do not meet the eligibility criteria for Ayushman Bharat may either get false poverty certificates to get a card themselves or claim false relationships to people who have these cards.
- **Politicisation of Scheme:** Some of the states such as West Bengal, Odisha, Telangana etc. have decided not to implement PM-JAY Scheme.
- **Budget allocation** for PM-JAY has stagnated at Rs 6,400 crore. (Needed amount- around Rs 1 lakh crores on annual basis)
- **Low Coverage** of beneficiaries
- **Absence of Private healthcare facilities** in backward states.

- **Unethical practices** by private sector wherein hospitals are performing unnecessary procedures (for example, Caesarean operation instead of normal delivery)

Strategies to ensure Universal Health Coverage in India

We can learn from countries such as South Korea, Singapore, Thailand, Switzerland, Sri Lanka etc. which have provided for universal health care. This can be done through: -

a. Steadily increasing the Public expenditure on health;
b. Enhancing the capacity of the Public healthcare facilities to utilize funds efficiently;
c. Expanding the coverage of Healthcare Insurance;
d. Government acting as enabler and facilitator to enable private sector to provide affordable healthcare.

- **Declaration of Right to Health as Fundamental Right:** Presently, the Right to health is not explicitly included under the Indian constitution as Fundamental right. In order to ensure greater commitment of the government towards health, there is a need to include health as a constitutional and fundamental right as provided under Brazilian constitution.
- **Reducing Information Asymmetry in Private healthcare:** The Economic Survey 2020-21 has highlighted the problem of Information asymmetry in the private healthcare system leading to exploitation of the patients, higher costs and poor-quality delivery. Hence, there is a need to set up Information Utilities that would give ratings to the private hospitals and doctors based upon the quality of healthcare delivery. Such a rating mechanism would enable the people to choose the best doctors (or hospitals), reduce the information asymmetry and force the private healthcare system to be cost-efficient and provide high quality service delivery.
- **Devising Universal Health Coverage:** The National Health Policy 2017 seeks to progressively achieve the Universal health coverage by enhancing the public health expenditure to 2.5% of the GDP in a time bound manner. The Srinath Reddy Committee which submitted its recommendations in 2010 has highlighted as to how the Universal Health coverage can be achieved in India. This can be done in the following manner:
  - Both Central and State Governments should increase public expenditures on health to at least 3% of GDP by 2022. The increase in the public expenditure can be possible by increasing the Tax-to-GDP ratio of the Government.
  - The Government must ensure availability of free essential medicines by increasing public spending on drug procurement.
  - Since the primary health care forms the foundation of the health care system, the Government must spend at least 70% of its fund for improving the primary health care system.
- **Decentralised approach**: Decentralization has played a fundamental part in Brazilian health-financing reform. In 1996, legislation transferred part of the responsibility for the management and financing of health care to the states and municipal governments.
- Similarly, in case of India, there is a need to take the states and local bodies on board to ensure the success of health care interventions. The states and local bodies must be required to spend a certain percent of their total budget towards the health.

BANKING AND FINANACE

ARC-AMC MODEL TO RESOLVE NPAs

#BANKING

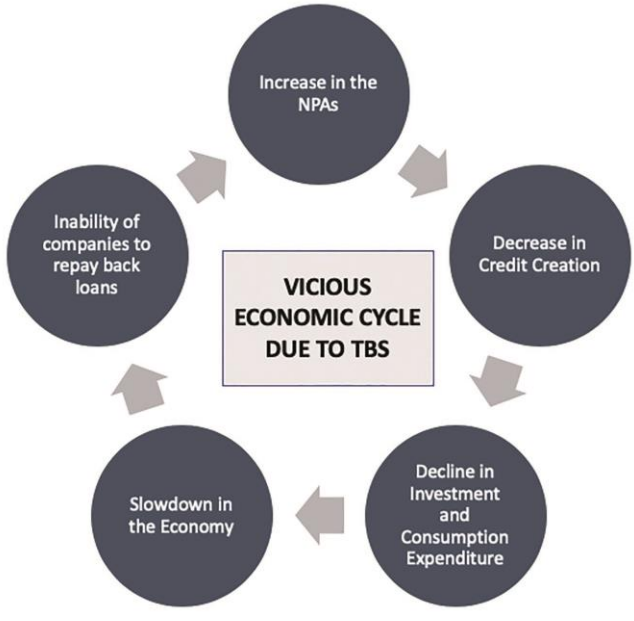
PRIMARY SOURCE BusinessLine

IN NEWS

The Union Budget 2021-22 has proposed to set up a Bad Bank in the form of Asset Reconstruction company (ARC)

and Asset Management Company (AMC) to solve the twin balance sheet problem of the Indian banks and kick start the credit creation in the Indian Economy. The newly proposed ARC-AMC model would help resolve stressed assets of around Rs 2-2.5 lakh crores concentrated in 70 large accounts. In this regard, let us discuss the various facets of the Bad Bank.

Understanding the Twin Balance Sheet problem (TBS) and its impact: The Twin Balance sheet problem highlights that the balance sheets of the banks as well as companies are in bad shape. While, the balance sheet of the Banks is dominated by the higher NPAs, on the other hand, the balance sheet of the companies is dominated by higher debt levels and their inability to repay back loans. Such a TBS problem puts the economy into vicious economic cycle as seen below.


Increase in the NPAs
Decrease in Credit Creation
Decline in Investment and Consumption Expenditure
Slowdown in the Economy
Inability of companies to repay back loans
VICIOUS ECONOMIC CYCLE DUE TO TBS

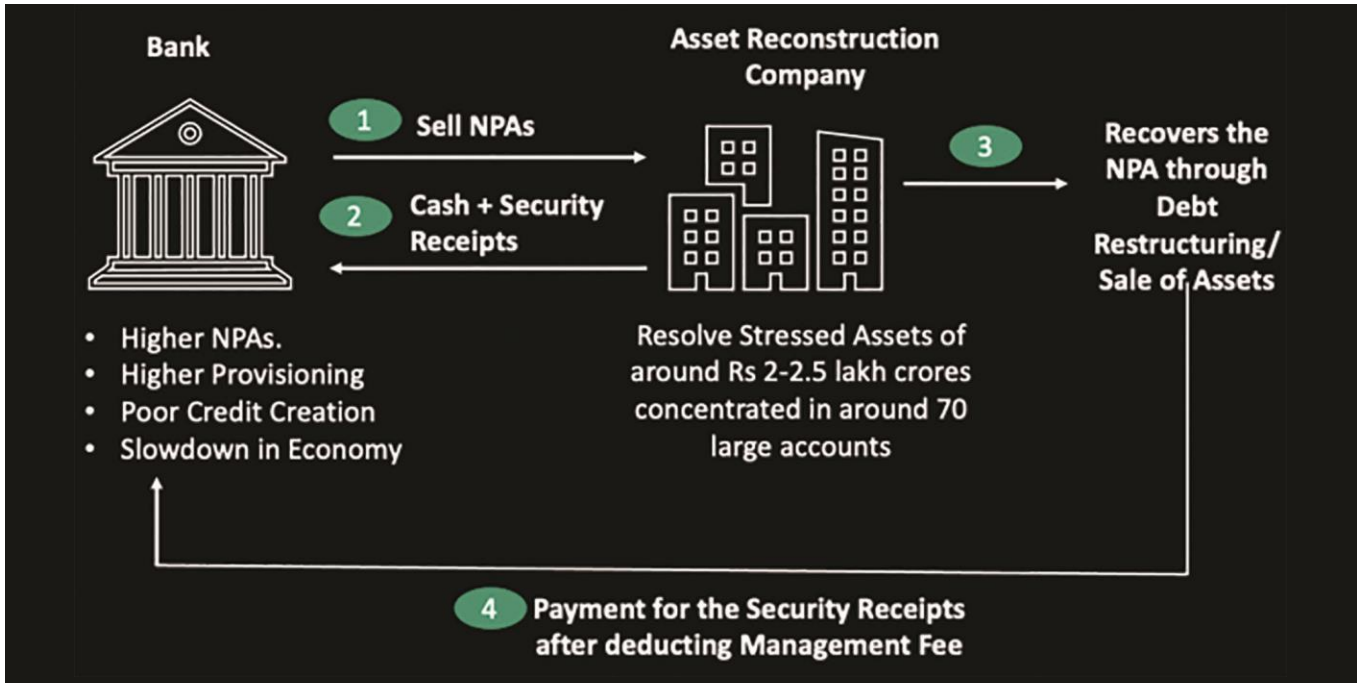
WHAT IS A BAD BANK?

- The Bad Bank is a bank which takes over the NPAs of the other banks and hence leads to improvement in their financial position. For example, let's say a Bank XYZ has total NPAs of around Rs 1000 crores. In accordance with RBI's norms, the Bank here would be required to set aside certain percentage of its profits to cover the loss arising from such NPAs. This is referred to as **Provisioning Norms**. Hence, the increase in the NPAs accompanied by higher provisioning requirements would severely constraint ability of the Bank to lend loans and hence affects its overall financial position. That is where, a Bad Bank comes into picture.
- In this case, the Bad bank can take over NPAs worth Rs 1000 crores from Bank XYZ at say Rs 800 crores. Now, the Bad Bank can undertake restructuring of such loans or undertake any other mechanism to recover the NPA amount. As far as Bank XYZ is concerned, it is at least able to get Rs 800 crores. (In the absence of Bad Bank, the Bank XYZ would not even recover that much amount).
- **Idea of Bad Bank**: The Economic Survey 2016-17 had proposed to set up Bad Bank, which should be called as **Public Asset Rehabilitation Agency (PARA)**. The PARA should be funded and owned by the Government of India. Such a proposal was also put forward by the Indian Banks Association (IBA) in June 2020.
- **Difference between Bad Bank and ARC**: The Bad Bank initially proposed by the Economic Survey 2016-17 was to be set and owned by the Government. However, the Budget has proposed the ARC, which would be set up and financed by Banks themselves. So, one major difference is in nature of ownership. However, since the nature of role performed by them is same, the terms "Bad Bank" and "ARC" can be used interchangeably.

  Note: The Asset Reconstruction Companies are registered with the RBI under the provisions of SARFAESI Act.
- **Difference between ARC and AMC:** We can consider the ARC as a holding company that owns the AMC. The ARC buys the Bad loans from the Banks and then transfers them to the AMC. The AMC would then carry out restructuring to recover the bad loans. The AMC

would be manned by professionals who have necessary expertise in recovering the Bad loans. For example, they may have requisite capability to take over the management of the company (which has defaulted), revive the company, make it profitable and then sell it off to recover the NPAs.

HOW BAD LOANS WILL BE RESOLVED THROUGH ASSET RECONSTRUCTION COMPANIES?


Bank
Asset Reconstruction Company
1 Sell NPAs
2 Cash + Security Receipts
3
Recovers the NPA through Debt Restructuring/ Sale of Assets
Higher NPAs.
Higher Provisioning
Poor Credit Creation
Slowdown in Economy
Resolve Stressed Assets of around Rs 2-2.5 lakh crores concentrated in around 70 large accounts
4 Payment for the Security Receipts after deducting Management Fee

- **Step 1:** The ARC would buy NPAs from the Banks. The Money is paid to the Banks in the form of Cash and Security Receipts. 15% of money is paid in form of Cash and 85% in form of Security Receipts (SR). The SARFAESI Act provides for the issuance of Security Receipts.
- **Step 2:** Decrease in NPAs on Banks' Balance Sheets--> Lower Provisioning--> Capital gets unlocked--> Increase in Credit Creation--> Economic
- **Step 3:** The ARC recovers the NPA either through Debt restructuring or sale of mortgaged assets.
- **Step 4:** The ARC makes the payment for the security receipts after deducting its management fee.

Why a new ARC has been proposed to be established?

Presently, there are around 10-15 ARCs, out of which only 3-4 ARCs are well capitalised to take over NPAs worth Rs 500 crores. However, the total NPAs concentrated in 70 large accounts is high as 2-2.5 lakh crores. Obviously, we could have strengthened the existing ARCs to solve this. But, the Government believes that a new ARC without any legacy issues would be well equipped to handle this.

PROS AND CONS OF BAD BANK

Bad Bank- Pros and Cons	
Arguments in Favour	**Arguments against**
Improvement in the balance Sheet of the Banks due to decrease in the NPAs.	The Bad Bank stands ready to buy NPAs from the Banks. Hence, this would discourage the Banks from exercising due caution in lending loans (Moral Hazard)
Unlocking of the capital that was earlier locked up as provisioning requirements. This would lead to increase in	According to Ex-RBI Governor Raghuram Rajan, the Setting up of Bad Bank would merely lead to transfer of Assets

the credit creation.	from one entity to another
Enable the Bank to focus on their core areas of accepting deposits and lending loans. The function of recovery of bad loans gets transferred to the specialist Bad Bank.	The NPAs of Banks has increased on account of number of reasons such as Political interference in working of Banks, Increase in wilful defaulters, poor recovery process etc. Hence, Bad Bank does not solve the core underlying reasons which led to increase in NPAs in the first instance. The Bad Bank is thus considered to be superficial solution to the underlying problem of NPAs.
Most of the NPAs are concentrated in the larger borrowers who have taken loans from multiple banks. Presently, such Banks come together to form Committee of Creditors (CoC) and formulate a resolution plan to recover the NPAs. However, such a mechanism is presently facing problem of coordination and delays in the recovery of NPAs. Setting up of Bad Bank would enable the multiple Banks to transfer their NPAs simultaneously to Bad Bank and improve their balance sheets	Dilemma over pricing of NPAs Higher pricing of Loans → Loss to ARC Lower pricing of Loans → Loss to Banks Delays in recovery of NPAs by the ARCs.

Way Forward: The Economic Survey 2016-17 emphasized that addressing the stressed assets problem would require 4 R's: **Reform, Recognition, Recapitalization, and Resolution**. The setting up of Bad Bank without focussing on these 4 R's would mean that the fundamental problems that led to NPAs in first place continue to remain. Hence, the setting up of ARC-AMC model to resolve the stressed assets should be accompanied by 4 R's.

NaBFID

#FINANCE

PRIMARY SOURCE Business Standard | SECONDARY SOURCE BusinessLine

SECONDARY SOURCE FINANCIAL EXPRESS

IN NEWS

In the Union Budget 2021-22, the Finance Minister has proposed to set up National Bank for Financing Infrastructure and Development (NaBFID). This Bank would act as a provider, enabler and catalyst for infrastructure financing and thus give a boost to the National Infrastructure pipeline. In this regard, let us look into different facets related to Development Banks.

What are Development Finance Institution(DFI)? Specialised financial institutions to provide long term credit at concessional rates to certain critical sectors such as Agricultural, Infrastructure, Industries etc.

- **Global Examples**: China (China Development Bank), UK (Green Investment Bank), Germany (KfW)
- **Indian Examples:** NABARD (Agriculture and Rural Development), Industrial Finance Corporation of India (Industrial Development), SIDBI and MUDRA (MSME Development), EXIM Bank (Trade Development), National Housing Bank (Housing Infrastructure).
- **Note**: IFCI was the first ever development bank that was established in 1948. Even, ICICI and IDBI Banks were initially set up as Development Banks, but were later converted into Commercial banks based upon the recommendations of Narasimhan Committee.

HOW ARE THE DEVELOPMENT BANKS DIFFERENT FROM COMMERCIAL BANKS?

- **Source of Funds**: The Commercial Banks are majorly dependant on the depositors' money for extending

funds while the development Banks are dependent on the Government's financial support.

- **Nature of Loans**: The Commercial Banks extend short-term loans while the development Banks extend long-term loans.
- **Nature of Role**: The role of the commercial banks is confined to the extension of loans while the role of development banks is much more multidimensional. The Development Banks also offer various kinds of assistance to the companies such as identification of projects for undertaking investment, ensuring that the companies invest in financially viable projects, offering managerial assistance for the execution of projects etc.

Nature of Assistance provided by the Development Banks: The Development Banks may offer the following kinds of assistance to the companies:

- Extend long term finance at concessional rates to the companies.
- Subscribe/buy the shares of the companies which are involved in financing of infrastructure, industrial or housing projects
- Partial Credit Guarantee on the repayment of the bonds issued by the companies. This means that if the company issuing the bond defaults on its payment, the Development Bank would repay back a certain amount of money to the investors. This is known as Credit Enhancement. Such kind of guarantee on the repayment of loans reduces the risk enabling the companies to borrow money at lower rates of interest.

HOW THE SETTING UP OF NaBFID WOULD BENEFIT INDIAN ECONOMY?

- **Meet Investment Needs** to realise $ 5 trillion by the end of 2024-25.
- **Reduce Pressure on Commercial Banks** and help address the Asset-Liability Mismatch.
- **Lower Cost of Capital**: The credit enhancement provided by the development Banks would enable the companies to raise loans at lower rates of interest.
- **Reduce Foreign Currency Exposures**: Presently, some of the Infrastructural and housing finance companies borrow loans from overseas market. The depreciation in the value of Rupee may put additional burden on them and expose them to fluctuations in the exchange rate.

STRATEGIES NEEDED TO ENSURE SUCCESS OF NABFID

- India's experience with the Development Banks has so far been a mixed bag. On one hand, some of the development banks were embroiled in controversies (National Housing Bank was involved in Harshad Mehta Scam). While on the other hand, some of the development banks such as the one established by Karnataka Government provided necessary funding to Infosys company during its initial days, which in turn enabled Infosys to become a global giant. Hence, India has to learn from its past experiences in order to ensure the success of NaBFID.
- **Independence and Autonomy**: Ensure professionalism, autonomy and effective control and audit mechanism. Otherwise, NaBFID's performance would be lacklustre and similar to that of Public Sector Banks.
- **Enhance Access to Long-term Capital:** The Budget 2021-22 has allocated only around Rs 20,000 crores, which is too little for our mammoth infrastructure needs. Enhanced financing can be provided by:

1. Long-term credit from RBI to NaBFID through Long-term Repo Operations (LTROs).
2. Declaration of Bonds issued by NaBFID as eligible securities for meeting SLR requirements of the Banks. (Encourage the Banks to buy Bonds issued by NaBFID--> Enable NaBFID to raise money from Banks)
3. Enable NaBFID to borrow money from International Institutions such as World Bank, ADB etc.

- **Infuse Competition**: Monopoly by NaBFID in infrastructure financing may lead to operational inefficiencies; need to encourage private sector to establish Development Banks so as to infuse competition.

- **Enhancing Investor base**: Make it easier for the pension fund companies, Insurance companies, mutual fund companies to invest in bonds issued by NaBFID; Tax incentives to the individuals upon investing in bonds issued by NaBFID etc.

G-SECS MARKET

#BANKING

PRIMARY SOURCE | The Indian EXPRESS

IN NEWS

The RBI has recently announced that the Retail Investors would be able to directly invest in the Government Securities (G-Secs). Until now, direct access to G-Secs was limited to institutional players such as Banks, Primary dealers, Insurance companies, Mutual funds, Foreign portfolio investors etc. Hence, the decision of the RBI to provide direct access to the retail investors to the G-Secs Market is a major structural reform.

WHAT ARE GOVERNMENT SECURITIES (G-Secs)?

- A Government Security (G-Sec) is a **tradeable instrument** issued by the Central Government or the State Governments. It acknowledges the Government's debt obligation. Such securities are short term (usually called treasury bills, with original maturities of less than one year) or long term (usually called Government bonds or dated securities with original maturity of one year or more).
- In India, the Central Government issues both, treasury bills and bonds or dated securities while the State Governments issue only **bonds or dated securities, which are called the State Development Loans (SDLs).** G-Secs carry practically no risk of default and, hence, are called risk-free gilt-edged instruments.
- **How are the G-Secs issued?** The G-Secs are issued through auctions conducted by RBI. Auctions are conducted on the electronic platform called the **E-Kuber**, the Core Banking Solution (CBS) platform of RBI. Scheduled Banks, Primary Dealers, Insurance companies etc. who maintain accounts with RBI, are members of this electronic platform. All members of E-Kuber can place their bids in the auction through this electronic platform.
- **Participation of Retail Investors in G-Secs Market**: Presently, the Retail Investors do not maintain account with the RBI and hence cannot directly buy G-Secs from the RBI through the E-Kuber platform. However, the retail investors can buy the G-Secs indirectly through the aggregators/ Facilitators such as Banks, Primary dealers, Stock exchanges etc. Usually, the aggregators/facilitators charge certain commission/brokerage for buying G-Secs on behalf of retail investors.

What is the RBI's new proposal? The RBI would launch a new platform known as **"Retail Direct"** to allow retail investors to buy G-Secs directly from the RBI. In order to buy G-Secs, the Retail investors would be required to open their gilt accounts with the RBI. (Similar to DEMAT Account for buying shares/Bonds etc.)

BENEFITS FOR DIFFERENT STAKEHOLDERS

- **Retail Investors:** Risk-free Investment; Held in DEMAT form; Can be sold easily in secondary market to meet immediate cash requirements; can be used as collateral to borrow loans etc.
- **Government:** Government has planned to borrow around Rs 12 lakh crores from the market for the present financial year--> Make it easier for the Government to mobilize household deposits for undertaking long-term investment.
- **Economy:** Deepen the G-Secs Market--> Higher Investment rates--> Promote Economic Growth.

BOND YIELDS AND OPERATION TWIST

#FINANCE

PRIMARY SOURCE | BusinessLine SECONDARY SOURCE | THE HINDU

IN NEWS

Recently, the yields on the long-term G-Secs increased from recent low of 5.76% to 6.20%. The increase in the yield rates in turn led to negative impact on stock market, particularly the Equities market.

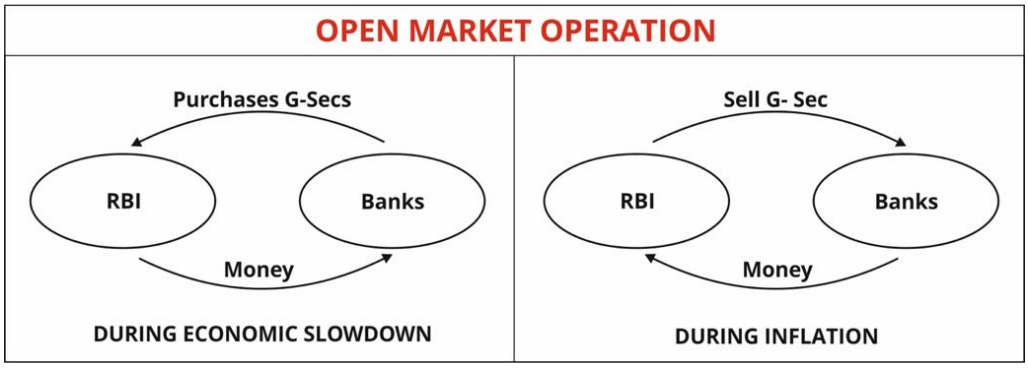
Hence, in order to bring down the yield rates to below 6%, the RBI decided to undertake Special Open Market Operations (OMOs), which is sometimes referred to as

"Operation Twist". Typically, the RBI carries out OMO sales to suck out excess liquidity and OMO purchases to inject liquidity. However, under Operation Twist, the RBI carries out simultaneous sale and purchase of G-Secs to influence the yield rates on the G-Secs. So, let us understand in detail about the working mechanism of "Operation Twist"

UNDERSTANDING THE BASICS

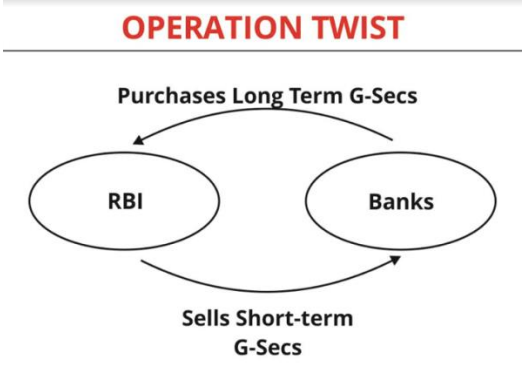
- The Government Issues Government bonds (also known as G-Secs) in order to borrow money. The G-Secs have mainly 3 characteristics- **Face Value, Fixed Rate of Interest (coupon rate) and Maturity period**. These G-Secs are also traded in the secondary market wherein they are bought and sold by various investors.
- In the secondary market, two related aspects of G-Secs (including other bonds) also come into picture- **Bond Price and Bond Yield.**
- The Bond price is the current market price of the Bond in the secondary market. The Bond price depends upon the demand for the bond. Higher the demand, higher would be the Bond Price and lower the demand, the lower would be the Bond price.
- The yield on the bonds refers to the annual returns on the bonds. The Yield depends on the purchase price of the bond and the coupon rate. It is calculated as **(Interest on Bond/ Market price of the Bond) * 100.**
- Let us understand these concepts by taking an example.
    - Let's say the Government Issues G-Sec with a face value of Rs 100. The maturity period is 10 years, and it carries coupon rate of 10%. Such a G-Sec has been bought by investor A. So, the investor A would get Rs 10 as interest on an annual basis.
    - Now, the bond price is same as the face value i.e., Rs 100.The yield would be (10/ 100) * 100 i.e. 10.
    - Going forward, let's say the investor A sells the G-Sec to another investor B in the secondary market at Rs 90. So, the bond price is now Rs 90. Accordingly, Yield would be (10/90) * 100 i.e. 11.11%.
    - On the other hand, if the investor A sells the G-Sec to another investor B at Rs 110.Then, Bond price would be 110 and the yield would be (10/110) * 100 i.e., 9.09%.
    - Now, looking at both these examples, it can be inferred that the Bond prices and Bond yields are inversely proportional to each other. As the Bond prices increase, the bond yields would reduce and the Bond prices decrease, the Bond Yields would increase.
    - This can be summed up as follows :-
    - ✓ ***Higher Demand for Bonds in the Market--> Increase in the Bond Prices--> Decrease in the Bond Yields***
    - ✓ ***Lower Demand for Bonds in the Market--> Decrease in the Bond Prices--> Increase in the Bond Yields***

OPEN MARKET OPERATIONS (OMOS)



The OMOs refers to the buying/selling of the G-Secs by the RBI in order to control the liquidity in the economy. When the RBI feels that there is excess liquidity in the market, it resorts to sale of securities thereby sucking out the rupee liquidity. Similarly, when the liquidity conditions are tight, the RBI may buy securities from the market, thereby releasing liquidity into the market.

UNDERSTANDING OPERATION TWIST



The Operation Twist is the special OMOs carried out by the RBI. It is called as **special OMO** because the RBI would be **simultaneously buying and selling** the Government Securities. The RBI would sell short-term G-Secs to the Banks and financial institutions and collect money. The same money would then be used by the RBI to buy long term G-Secs. The RBI has decided to sell two short term G-Secs worth Rs 15000 crores and simultaneously buy long term G-Secs.

IMPACT OF OPERATION TWIST

- *RBI purchases long-term G-Secs--> Decrease in supply of long-term G-Secs--> Higher Demand--> Increase in Bond Prices--> Decrease in Yields on Long-term G-Secs.*
- *RBI sells short-term G-Secs--> Increase in supply of Short-term G-Secs--> Lower Demand--> Decrease in Bond Prices--> Increase in Yields on Short-term G-Secs*

RATIONALE BEHIND OPERATION TWIST

The Operation Twist has primarily been undertaken to bring down the yields on the long-term G-Secs to below 6%.

Why is it important to lower the yields on G-Secs?

1. The Fiscal Deficit of the Government has increased to 9.5% of GDP (Budget 2021-22). The Government is expected to borrow around Rs 12 lakh crores from the market through the issuance of G-Secs in the present financial year.

As the supply of G-Secs in the market increase--> Lower Demand for G-Secs--> Lower Bond Prices--> Higher Yields on G-Secs--> RBI has to offer higher yields to investors on issuance of new G-Secs--> Higher Borrowing cost for the Government.

2. As Yields on G-Secs increase--> Investors would demand higher yields on Corporate Bonds--> Increased Borrowing cost for Corporate Bonds--> Adverse impact on Private Sector Investment
3. As yields on G-Secs increase--> Higher returns for Investors in Bonds in comparison to Equities--> Sale of Shares and reinvest money in the Bonds--> Adverse impact on the Equity Market--> Fall in SENSEX and NIFTY.
4. Banks use yields on long term G-Secs as a reference for fixing interest rates on long term loans such as home loans, vehicle loans etc. As Yields on long-term G-Secs increase--> Increase in the rates of Interest on long term loans--> Decrease in Credit creation--> Hamper Economic growth and development.

INFLATION TARGETING FRAMEWORK

#FINANCE

PRIMARY SOURCE BusinessLine

IN NEWS

In its latest report on currency and finance (RCF) for the year 2020-21, the RBI has recommended the continuation of the Inflation targeting framework in India for the next 5 years. In this regard, let us discuss the benefits and challenges associated with the Inflation Targeting Framework in India.

BACKGROUND

- The RBI Act, 1934 was amended in 2016 to provide for the adoption of flexible inflation targeting. Under this act, the Central Government determines the inflation target in terms of the Consumer Price Index, once in every five years. This inflation target is required to be met by Monetary Policy Committee (MPC).
- Presently, the Monetary Policy agreement (MPA) signed between Centre and RBI provides that MPC should maintain an **ideal rate of inflation of 4%** which could increase or decrease by 2% i.e., the rate of inflation should always be between 2% to 6%.

- The RBI in its latest report has recommended the continuation of the current inflation target of 4% with a +/-2% tolerance band for the next five years.

BENEFITS OF INFLATION TARGETING

- **Enhanced Transparency:** Explicitly mandated Inflation target brings in more amount of clarity and predictability with respect to the rate of Inflation and monetary policy formulation.
- **Promote Growth**: A high rate of inflation leads to decrease in the purchasing power of currency, reduces the savings and investment rate, increases the unemployment and leads to overall decrease in the GDP growth rate. Further, high rate of inflation is accompanied by higher levels of Fiscal Deficit and Current Account Deficit leading to an adverse impact on the macro-economic stability of the country. Hence, low and moderate level of inflation would incentivise the investors to undertake the investment in the economy leading to the promotion of higher growth and development.
- **Autonomy and Accountability of RBI:** As per the monetary policy framework agreement, the RBI has been given complete autonomy in maintaining the rate of inflation within the mandated targets. If the RBI fails to maintain the Inflation within the target, then it would be required to submit in writing, the reasons for its failure.
- Such a provision enables the RBI to enjoy autonomy and at the same time, the enables the Government to have enhanced accountability over the actions of the RBI.
- **Empirical Evidence**: The Inflation targeting has been quite successful in some of the advanced economies such as UK, New Zealand etc. These advanced economies have been able to maintain moderate rate of inflation for a much longer time leading to increased macro-economic stability.

PROBLEMS AND CHALLENGES WITH INFLATION TARGETING

- **Disregards the Multi-faceted role of RBI:** In a developing country like India, it is not practical for the central bank to focus exclusively on inflation without taking into account the larger development context. The RBI needs to balance between growth, price stability and financial stability.
- **No Clear link between Price Stability and Financial Stability**: Prior to 2008 Global Financial Crisis, advanced economies were able to maintain moderate rate of inflation for a long term mainly due to adoption of Inflation Targeting. However, the 2008 Global Financial Crisis has clearly proved that price stability alone cannot lead to financial stability and the excessive focus of the Central banks on the price stability may lead to neglect of other crucial functions such as regulation leading to the economic crisis.
- **Empirical Evidence against Inflation Targeting in India:** The RBI has been able to maintain stable rate of Inflation within the mandated range since last 2-3 years. However, Inspite of stable rate of Inflation, Indian economy is facing challenges on multiple fronts such as lower GDP growth rate, higher unemployment etc.
- **Poor Monetary Policy Transmission**: The Inflation targeting is more suited to the developed economies since the monetary policy transmission in such economies is quite efficient. However, in case of India, the monetary policy transmission is quite inefficient and this can in turn reduce the effectiveness of Inflation Targeting.
- **Hinder GDP Growth:** In order to contain Inflation, the RBI would be required to increase the rate of Interest by following the contractionary monetary policy. However, such a policy would lead to increase in the rate of interest on the loans leading to decrease in investment and consumption expenditure leading to decline in the GDP growth rates.
- **Does not address the Supply Side Inflation**: The inflation in India may take place due to supply side bottlenecks such as increase in global crude oil prices, poor monsoon, floods etc. Under such circumstances, RBI would have limited role to play in easing the rate of inflation. Rather, the Government of India would be required to address these supply side disruptions in order to moderate the prices of such commodities.

WAY FORWARD

- Post-Global Financial crisis, the dominant view around the world is that **flexible inflation targeting**, rather

than pure inflation targeting is more efficient for monetary policy formulation.

- According to the Flexible inflation targeting, the role of the Central Bank would depend on the prevailing rate of inflation in the country. If the rate of inflation is way off target, the primary emphasis of the central Bank would be to bring the rate of inflation within an acceptable range.
- On the other hand, if the rate of inflation is within the range, the central Bank should focus on its other core objectives. Thus, it is being said that the Central banks should focus on flexible inflation targeting rather than pure inflation targeting. In this aspect, there is a need for greater debate around kind of Inflation targeting in India.

RBI'S MONETARY POLICY

#BANKING

PRIMARY SOURCE | FINANCIAL EXPRESS

IN NEWS

The RBI's Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) has decided to keep the policy rates unchanged and continue with the accommodative policy stance to kick start the Indian economy. Apart from that, the MPC has taken a number of policy decisions to enhance liquidity in the economy and deepen the Financial sector.

POLICY RATES OF RBI

Policy Repo Rate	**4.00%**
Reverse Repo Rate	**3.35%**
Marginal Standing Facility Rate	**4.25%**
Bank Rate	**4.25%**

MEASURES TAKEN TO ENHANCE LIQUIDITY SUPPLY

1. **On-tap Targeted long Term Repo Operations (TLTROs) extended to NBFCs:** Presently, the On-tap Targeted long Term Repo Operations (TLTROs) is applicable to certain stressed sectors identified by the Kamath Committee. The RBI has decided to extend this facility even to the NBFCs.
2. **Restoration of Cash Reserve Ratio (CRR) in two phases beginning March 2021**

Criteria	**Statutory Liquidity Ratio (SLR)**	**Cash Reserve ratio (CRR)**
Meaning	% of depositor's money maintained with the Banks themselves	% of Depositors' money maintained with the RBI
Form of Maintenance	Maintained in form of Cash, Gold and G-Secs	Maintained in the form of Cash
Scope for earning Profits?	Scope for bank to earn profits through investment in G-Secs or Gold	No Scope for Bank to earn profits as RBI does not pay interest

New Announcement: To help banks tide over the disruption caused by COVID-19, the Cash Reserve Ratio (CRR) of all banks was reduced by 100 basis points to 3.0 per cent beginning March 28, 2020. The dispensation was available for a period of one year ending March 26, 2021. On a review of monetary and liquidity conditions, it has been decided to gradually restore the CRR in two phases back to 4%.

3. **Marginal Standing Facility (MSF) - Extension of Relaxation**

	MSF	**Repo**	**Reverse Repo**
What is it?	Interest paid by Banks for overnight borrowing	Interest paid by Banks for short term Loans	Interest paid by RBI for short term loans from banks
Purpose	Inject Liquidity	Inject Liquidity	Suck out Liquidity
Collateral?	G-Secs part of SLR	G-Secs outside SLR	G-Secs with RBI
Relationship	Higher than Repo	Higher than Reverse Repo	Lower than Repo

New Decision: In March 2020, the banks were allowed to avail of funds under the Marginal Standing Facility (MSF) by dipping into the Statutory Liquidity Ratio (SLR) up to an additional one per cent of net demand and time liabilities (NDTL), i.e., cumulatively up to 3 per cent of NDTL. This facility, which was initially available up to June 30, 2020 was later extended in phases up to March 31, 2021. It has now been decided to continue with the MSF relaxation for a further period of six months, i.e., up to September 30, 2021.

PUBLIC FINANCE AND TAXATION

15th FINANCE COMMISSION

PUBLIC FINANCE

PRIMARY SOURCE BusinessLine

IN NEWS:

The 15th Finance Commission headed by Mr. N.K. Singh has recently submitted its recommendations. Usually, the Finance Commission recommendations are valid for a period of 5 years. However, this time, the 15th Finance Commission recommendations would be valid for a period of 6 years.

Earlier, the 15th Finance Commission had submitted its first set of recommendations which were applicable for the financial year 2020-21. Now, the commission has submitted its second report, whose recommendations will be applicable for the next 5 years i.e., 2021-2026.

In this regard, let us understand the need for setting up of Finance Commission in India and the important recommendations of 15th Finance Commission.

IMPORTANT RECOMMENDATIONS OF 15TH FINANCE COMMISSION

- **Vertical Devolution of Taxes:** The share of states in the central taxes for the 2021-26 period is recommended to be 41%, same as that for 2020-21. This is less than the 42% share recommended by the 14th Finance Commission for 2015-20 period. The adjustment of 1% is to provide for the newly formed union territories of Jammu and Kashmir, and Ladakh from the resources of the Centre.
- **Criteria for the Horizontal distribution of taxes among the States:** The criteria for distribution of central taxes among states for 2021-26 period is same as that for 2020-21.

Criteria	14th Finance Commission	15th Finance Commission
Income Distance	50	45
Population (1971 Census)	17.5	Not Considered
Population (2011 census)	10	15
Demographic Performance	Not Considered	12.5
Forest Cover	7.5	Not Considered
Forest and Ecology	Not Considered	10
Area	15	15
Tax Effort	Not considered	2.5
Total	100	100

ANALYSIS OF THE CRITERIA USED BY THE 15TH FINANCE COMMISSION:

- **Income Distance**: The Income distance criteria is the **difference between per-capita income of a particular state and state with the highest per-capita income.** If the income distance is larger, it would mean that a particular state is poorer and hence it would get higher share of taxes. If the income distance is smaller, it would mean that a particular state is richer and hence it would it would get lesser share of taxes.
- **Population**: Earlier, the 15th Finance Commission has asked to explore the possibility of using the

Population of 2011 census instead of 1971 census for the devolution of taxes. However, this was opposed by the Southern states. These states have taken substantial efforts to reduce the Population growth rates by undertaking the Family planning programmes since 1970s. So, naturally, if the criteria of 2011 census were to be used, this would lead to loss in the share of their taxes.

Here, the Finance Commission has done a fine balancing between the directions issued by the centre and concerns raised by the Southern states.

It has used the Population of 2011 census and done away with the Population of 1971 census. However, keeping in mind, the concerns raised by the Southern states, it has introduced the new criteria of Demographic performance. The Demographic performance indicator looks at the Fertility rate in a state. If the fertility rate in a particular state is lower, it would mean that such a state has taken substantial efforts to reduce its population growth rate and accordingly it would get a higher share. Since, the fertility rate in the southern states is much lower, the introduction of such an indicator is likely to reduce the impact caused by using the criteria of 2011 census instead of 1971 census.

- **Forest and ecology**: This criteria has been arrived at by calculating the share of dense forest of each state in the aggregate dense forest of all the states.
- **Tax effort:** This criterion has been used to reward states with higher tax collection efficiency. It has been computed as the ratio of the average per capita own tax revenue and the average per capita state GDP during the three-year period between 2014-15 and 2016-17.

  Grants-in-aid: The Terms of Reference of the Finance Commission require it to recommend grants-in-aid to the States. These grants include: (i) revenue deficit grants, (ii) grants to local bodies, and (iii) disaster management grants.
- **Revenue Deficit Grants**: In spite of the devolution of taxes from Centre, some of the states may not able to fund their revenue expenditure requirements on their own through their Revenue receipts. Hence, in order to meet requirements of such states, the Finance Commission provides for Revenue deficit grants. These grants are usually assigned in order to cover the gap between the Revenue expenditure and Revenue Receipts of the states.
- The 15th Finance Commission has estimated that 17 states would face revenue deficit post-devolution. To make up for this deficit, the Commission has recommended revenue deficit grants worth Rs 2.9 lakh crores to these 17 states.
- **Sector Specific Grants:** Sector-specific grants of Rs 1.3 lakh crores will be given to states for Health, Education, Agriculture etc.
- **Grants to local bodies**: The total grants to local bodies for 2021-26 has been fixed at Rs 4.36 lakh crore. The grants will be divided between states based on population and area in the ratio 90:10. The grants will be made available to all three tiers of Panchayat-village, block, and district. No grants will be released to local bodies of a state after March 2024 if the state does not constitute State Finance Commission and act upon its recommendations by then.

FISCAL ROADMAP

- **Fiscal deficit and debt levels:** The Centre should bring down fiscal deficit to 4% of GDP by 2025-26. For states, fiscal deficit should be reduced to 3% of GSDP.
- The Commission observed that the recommended path for fiscal deficit for the centre and states will result in a reduction of total liabilities of: (i) the centre from 63% of GDP in 2020-21 to 56 % in 2025-26, and (ii) the states on aggregate from 33% of GDP in 2020-21 to 32.5% by 2025-26.
- It also recommended forming a high-powered inter-governmental group to: (i) review the Fiscal Responsibility and Budget Management Act (FRBM), (ii) recommend a new FRBM framework for centre as well as states and oversee its implementation.

Challenges in the Goods and Service Tax: The 15th Finance Commission has highlighted some challenges with the implementation of the Goods and Services Tax (GST). These include: (i) large shortfall in collections as compared to original forecast, (ii) high volatility in collections, (iii) accumulation of large integrated GST credit, (iv) glitches in invoice and input tax matching, and (v) delay in refunds. The Commission observed that the continuing dependence of states on compensation from the central government (21 states out of 29 states in 2018-19) for making up for the shortfall in revenue is a concern.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- **Address the Inverted Duty Structure:** The term 'Inverted duty Structure' refers to a situation where the rate of tax on inputs purchased (i.e., GST Rate paid on inputs) is more than the GST rate on finished goods. The inverted duty structure leads to higher input tax credits and hence lower tax collection for the Government.
- **Revenue Neutrality**: A change in tax regime can be said to be revenue neutral if the modified tax is able to realise revenue comparable to the original tax regime. As far as GST is concerned, earlier, general government revenues from the taxes subsumed under GST was around 6.3 per cent in 2016-17. However, collections under GST was around 5.1 per cent of GDP in 2019-20. This clearly shows that post the implementation of GST, the overall indirect tax collections have failed to reach up to the earlier levels.
- Correcting the inverted duty structure and problems related to invoice matching in the next two years should progressively help India's GST to re-establish its revenue neutrality.
- **Rationalisation of GST rates**: The GST was introduced in order to simplify the tax structure and improve the tax compliance. However, the existing GST regime has multiple rates: 0, 0.25, 1, 3, 5, 12,
- 18 and 28%; Rate structure should be rationalised by merging the rates of 12% and 18%.

CENTRALLY SPONSORED SCHEMES (CSS)

Present Status: The Union Budget 2020- 21 shows that fifteen of the thirty umbrella CSS account for about 90 per cent of the total allocation under CSS. Many umbrella schemes have, within them, a number of small schemes, some of them with negligible allocations

- **Recommendations:** It is important to gradually stop the funding for those CSS and their subcomponents which have either outlived their utility or have insignificant budgetary outlays not commensurate to a national programme. There should also be a minimum threshold funding size for the approval of a CSS. Below the stipulated threshold, the administrating department should justify the need for the continuity of the scheme. Third-party evaluation of all CSS should be completed within a stipulated timeframe.

Funding of defence and internal security

- **Present Status:** Defence expenditure has, over time, been characterised by a higher share of revenue expenditure, huge pension bills and lower capital expenditure with high dependence on import of defence equipment.
- **Recommendations:** A dedicated non-lapsable fund called the Modernisation Fund for Defence and Internal Security (MFDIS) should be constituted under the Public Account for capital expenditure in defence and internal security. The fund will be funded through (a) Transfers from the Consolidated Fund of India (b) Disinvestment of defence PSUs (c) Monetisation of defence lands.

Public Health: States should increase spending on health to more than 8% of their budget by 2022. Primary healthcare expenditure should be two-thirds of the total health expenditure by 2022. Centrally sponsored schemes (CSS) in health should be flexible enough to allow states to adapt and innovate. Focus of CSS in health should be shifted from inputs to outcome. All India Medical and Health Service should be established.

INCLUSIVE GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT

JOBLESS GROWTH IN INDIA

#INCLUSIVE GROWTH

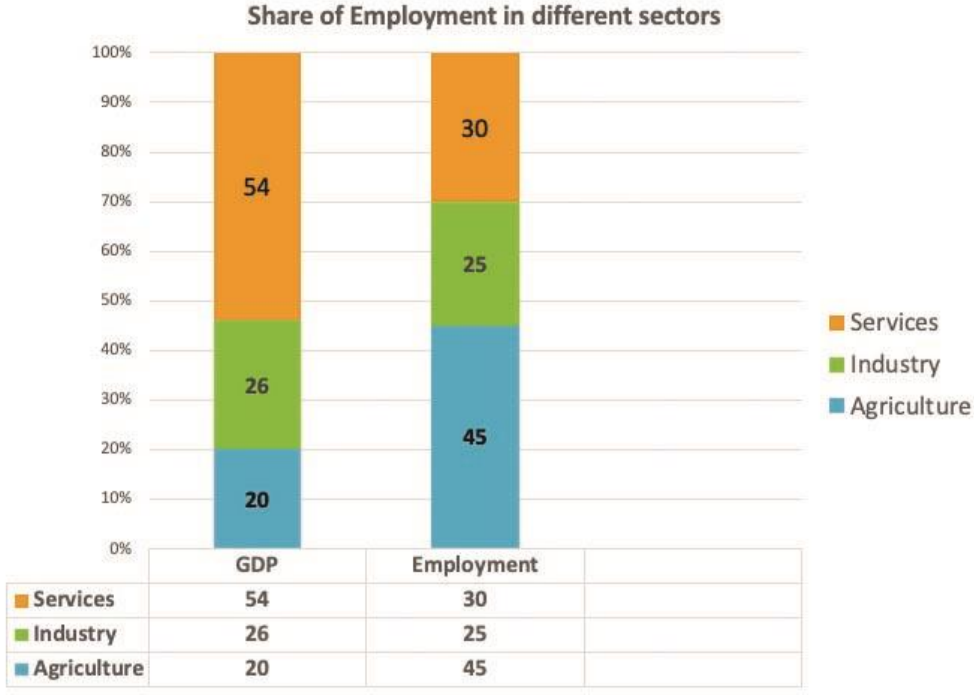
PRIMARY SOURCE | The Indian EXPRESS

In News: Just before the Covid crisis at the end of 2019-20 financial year, according to Centre for Monitoring Indian Economy (CMIE), India had around 403 million employed people and around 35 million unemployed people in the country. The total number of employed people in India has been steadily coming down since 2016- 407 million (2016-17), 405 million (2017-18), 400 million (2019-20).

This clearly highlights poor corelation between higher GDP growth rates and job creation in the Indian economy. This is a cause of concern since it can hamper our ability to reap demographic dividend

Hence, let us understand various facets of Jobless growth in India- Problems and Strategies needed.

EMPLOYMENT SITUATION IN INDIA



	GDP	Employment
Services	54	30
Industry	26	25
Agriculture	20	45

- **Jobless Growth:** - **Stagnation** in share of **Manufacturing Sector** to India's GDP at 17% since 1991 reforms; Dominance of small- sized firms; Complexity in the labor laws and land acquisition; lack of skill sets etc.
- **Nature of Jobs:** The Jobs created in the Indian Economy have been concentrated in low- paying, low-productivity informal sectors such as construction, small-sized enterprises. The Informal workers account for almost 90% of India's workforce. Hence, concerns have been raised over not just over the number of Jobs created, but also over the nature of Jobs.
- **Working Poors:** The informal workers face number of vulnerabilities such as poor wages, lack of access to

social security benefits, poor skill sets, lack effective representation through trade unions, lack of access to basic facilities such as housing, sanitation etc.

- **Decline in Female LFPR**: India exhibits a low and declining female labour force participation rate. The female labour force participation rate in India was 23.7 per cent in 2011-12 compared to 61 per cent in China, 56 per cent in the United States
- **Protection and social security:** A large number of workers that are engaged in the unorganized sector are not covered by labour regulations and social security.
- **Skills-Set**: According to the India Skill Report 2018, only 47 per cent of those coming out of higher educational institutions are employable.

STRATEGIES TO PROMOTE JOB CREATION

- **Focus on Labour Intensive** Industries such as Textile and Leather.
- **Exploring Tourism Potential:** Potential to create more than 40 million new jobs in the next 5 years.
- **Focus on Assemble in India:** By integrating "Assemble in India for the world" into Make in India, India would create about 4 crore well-paid jobs by 2025 and about 8 crores by 2030.
- **Incentivizing 'infant' MSME firms rather than dwarf firms:** Provision of incentives to firms irrespective of their age has led to dwarf firms. Hence, incentives should be limited to initial 5-7 years only.
- **Change in Orientation of SEZs**: SEZs to be renamed as **3 E's- Employment and Economic Enclaves**. Today, SEZs are viewed as zones promoting only exporters with special privileges; change in nomenclature will bring together all the categories of Investors that enable economic activity and boost employment creation.
- **Effective Implementation of Labour Reforms**, including promotion of Fixed Term Employment.
- **Promotion of secondary Agriculture** in the rural areas to boost non-farm employment.
- Making investment subsidies conditional on realizing a targeted level of employment per unit of investment.
- **Enhance female labour force participation** by ensuring the implementation of and employers' adherence to the recently passed Maternity Benefit (Amendment) Act, 2017, and the Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal) Act. It is also important to ensure implementation of these legislations in the informal sector.

AGRICULTURE AND FOOD MANAGEMENT

PDS- FUNCTIONING, LIMITATIONS AND REVAMPING

#FOOD MANAGEMENT

PRIMARY SOURCE BusinessLine

IN NEWS

The Food Subsidy Bill under the National Food Security Act (NFSA) 2013 has increased to almost around Rs 3.8 lakh crores, thus making the entire food grain management policy of the Government financially unsustainable. Hence, in order to make Public Distribution financially sustainable, the NITI Aayog has recently circulated a discussion paper for undertaking revision in the coverage of beneficiaries under NFSA. Even the Economic Survey 2020-21 has made important recommendations to improve the Public Distribution System.

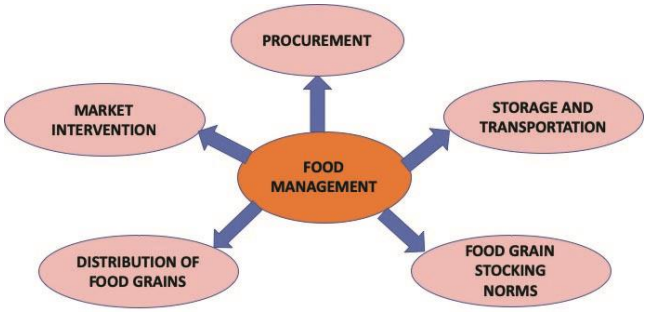
Keeping in mind the importance of PDS from the perspective of UPSC exam, we will focus on the following dimensions:

- ***Components of Food Grain Management***

- ***Government Initiatives to improve Food Grain Management***
- ***Various Issues in PDS***
- ***Reasons for Increase in Food Subsidy Bill***
- ***Recommendations to improve PDS***

VARIOUS COMPONENTS OF FOOD MANAGEMENT

The nodal agency to undertake procurement and storage of food grain is the Food Corporation of India (FCI).



- **Procurement:** The cost incurred by FCI for the procurement of food grains is referred to as **Economic Cost of Food grains**. It comprises of **3 components** - *Pooled cost of grains (weighted MSP of stock of food grains), Procurement incidentals (Labour charges, Transport charges, storage cost etc.) and cost of distribution.* The States have also been encouraged to undertake the procurement of food grains on their own through the Decentralised procurement scheme. It has been introduced to reduce the transportation and storage costs of FCI.
- **Food grain stocking norms:** The Government of India has revised the Buffer Norms w.e.f. January 2015 and the nomenclature of Buffer Norms has been changed to Food Grain Stocking Norms. It has 2 components:
  - **Operational Stocks**: For meeting monthly distributional requirement under TPDS and other welfare schemes.
  - **Strategic Reserves**: To meet emergency situations. (Presently it is 5 MT)

  Note: The norms are defined for a quarter of financial year i.e. how much buffer has to be maintained for each quarter of financial year.
- **Distribution of Food grains:** The National Food Security Act 2013 provides for coverage of up to 75 per cent of the rural population and up to 50 per cent of the urban population for receiving food grains under Targeted Public Distribution System (TPDS), thus covering about two thirds of the population of the country for receiving food grains at the rate of Rs 1/2/3 per kg for nutri-cereals/wheat/rice respectively.

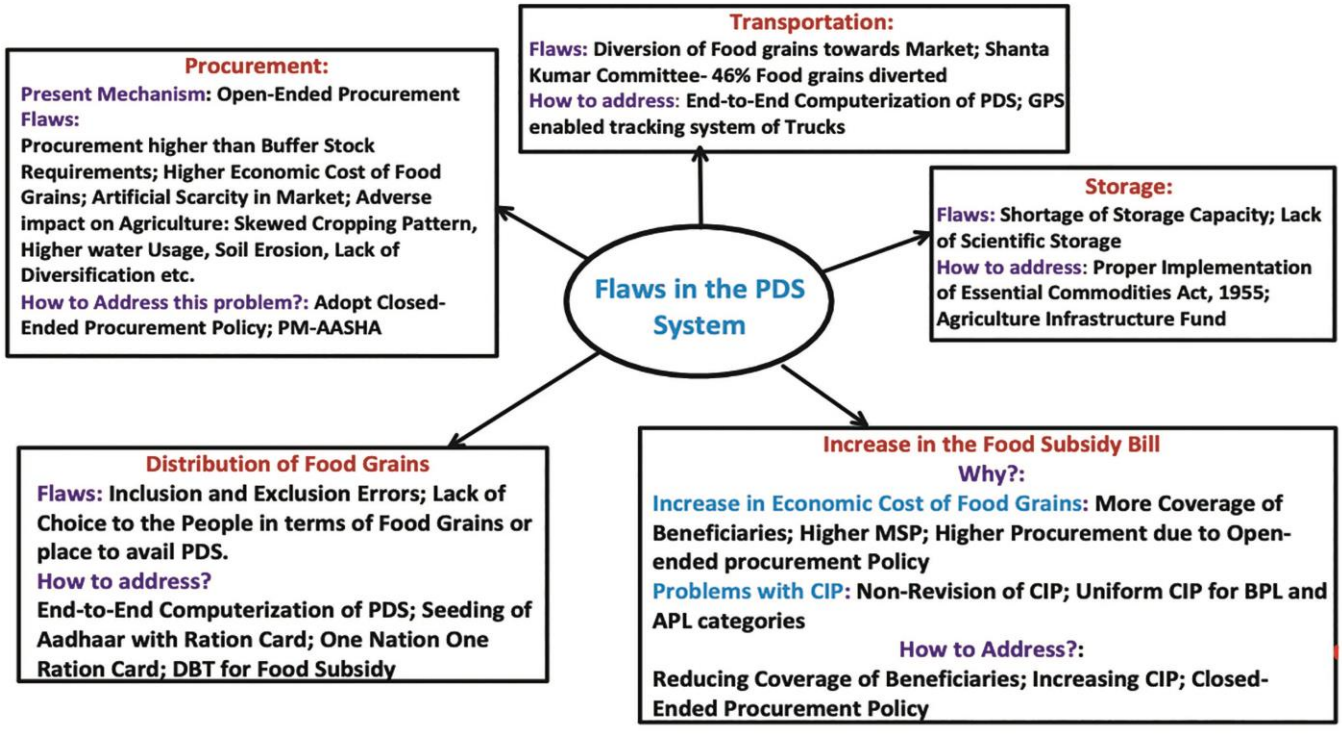
  Identification of beneficiaries under the Act is under two categories- households covered under Antyodaya Anna Yojana (AAY) and Priority Households. Priority Households are entitled to receive 5 kg per person per month, AAY households, which constitute the poorest of the poor, receive 35 Kg of food grains per household per month.

Note: The **Central Issue Price** is the price at which centre allocates food grains to the states. It can be considered as the price at which food grains are sold through the network of fair price shops. For instance, it is Rs 1/2/3 per kg for nutri-cereals/wheat/rice respectively. However, the central Issue Price (CIP) is defined in terms of Quintals (not in terms of Kg). Under the NFSA, the CIP is Rs 200/quintal in case of wheat and Rs 300/quintal in case of rice.

GOVERNMENT INITIATIVES TO IMPROVE FOOD MANAGEMENT

- State Governments, particularly those undertaking Decentralized Procurement (DCP), are encouraged to maximize procurement of wheat and rice.
- Strategic reserves of 5 million tonnes of food grains over the operational stocks are maintained to be used in extreme situations.
- Sale of wheat and rice is undertaken through **Open Market Sale Scheme (OMSS) (**Domestic) so as to check inflationary trend in prices of food grains.
- PDS reforms such as One Nation - One Ration Card, Aadhaar authenticated distribution through e-POS machines

VARIOUS ISSUES IN PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION SYSTEM (PDS)


Transportation:
Flaws: Diversion of Food grains towards Market; Shanta Kumar Committee- 46% Food grains diverted
How to address: End-to-End Computerization of PDS; GPS enabled tracking system of Trucks
Procurement:
Present Mechanism: Open-Ended Procurement
Flaws:
Procurement higher than Buffer Stock Requirements; Higher Economic Cost of Food Grains; Artificial Scarcity in Market; Adverse impact on Agriculture: Skewed Cropping Pattern, Higher water Usage, Soil Erosion, Lack of Diversification etc.
How to Address this problem?: Adopt Closed-Ended Procurement Policy; PM-AASHA
Flaws in the PDS System
Storage:
Flaws: Shortage of Storage Capacity; Lack of Scientific Storage
How to address: Proper Implementation of Essential Commodities Act, 1955; Agriculture Infrastructure Fund
Distribution of Food Grains
Flaws: Inclusion and Exclusion Errors; Lack of Choice to the People in terms of Food Grains or place to avail PDS.
How to address?
End-to-End Computerization of PDS; Seeding of Aadhaar with Ration Card; One Nation One Ration Card; DBT for Food Subsidy
Increase in the Food Subsidy Bill
Why?:
Increase in Economic Cost of Food Grains: More Coverage of Beneficiaries; Higher MSP; Higher Procurement due to Open-ended procurement Policy
Problems with CIP: Non-Revision of CIP; Uniform CIP for BPL and APL categories
How to Address?:
Reducing Coverage of Beneficiaries; Increasing CIP; Closed-Ended Procurement Policy

INCREASE IN THE FOOD SUBSIDY BILL

What constitutes Food subsidy? Food subsidy comprises of (i) subsidy provided to FCI for procurement and distribution of wheat and rice under NFSA and other welfare schemes and for maintaining the strategic reserve of food grains and (ii) subsidy provided to States for undertaking decentralized procurement. **The Food subsidy bill is calculated as the difference between Economic cost of Food grains and Central Issue price (CIP).**

Increase in Food Subsidy Bill: The food subsidy bill has increased from 1.2 lakh crores in 2014-15 to 3.8 lakh crores in 2020-21. In order to pay the food subsidy bill, the Government has been borrowing from National Small Savings Fund (NSSF) through the issuance of special G-Secs. (However, this practice of borrowing from NSSF has been discontinued from this year as announced in the Union Budget 2021-22)

REASONS FOR INCREASE IN FOOD SUBSIDY BILL

Increase in Economic Cost of Food grains

- Higher coverage of beneficiaries under NFSA as compared to erstwhile TPDS.
- Increase in MSP (Increase of one unit in real MSP leads to 0.48-unit increase in real economic cost of procurement)
- Higher procurement of food grains as against the stocking norms (due to Open Ended procurement Policy)
- Increase in storage cost

Problems with Central Issue Price (CIP)

- The CIP for NFSA beneficiaries has not been revised from Rs 200/quintal in case of wheat and Rs 300/quintal in case of rice. These rates were fixed under the Act initially for a period of three years from the date of commencement of the Act and thereafter were to be fixed by the Central Government from time to time, while not exceeding the minimum support price. However, it has not been revised since 2013. This has resulted in widening of the gap between the economic cost and CIP
- Uniform CIP for BPL and APL households

RECOMMENDATIONS TO IMPROVE PDS

- **NITI Aayog:** Reduce the percentage of beneficiaries under NFSA in the rural (from 75% to 60%) and urban

areas (from 50% to 40%). Accordingly, the number of beneficiaries under the NFSA will drop from 81 crores to 71 crores. This will lead to annual reduction in the Food subsidy bill by Rs 48,000 crores.

- **Shanta Kumar Committee:**
  - **Need for End-to-End Computerization**: Given that leakages in PDS range from 40 to 50 percent, Government should defer implementation of NFSA in states that have not done end to end computerization.
  - **Reducing the Coverage**: Reduce the current coverage of 67% of the population under NFSA to 40% (comfortably cover BPL families and some even above that)
  - **Increasing the Food grains:** The amount of food grains should be increased to 7kg/person from the present 5kg grain per person.
  - **Pricing:** Antyodaya households can be given grains at Rs 3/2/1/kg for the time being, but pricing for priority households must be linked to MSP, say 50 percent of MSP
- **Economic Survey 2020-21:** The Central Issue price (CIP) should be revised upwards; Coverage of the beneficiaries under NFSA should be reduced.

GOVERNMENT POLICIES/ INITIATIVES

ONE-PERSON COMPANIES

#GOVERNMENT POLICIES

PRIMARY SOURCE | THE HINDU

IN NEWS

In the Union Budget 2021-22, the Finance Minister has eased the restrictions on one-person companies which are registered under the Companies Act, 2013. The easing of these restrictions is set to give a boost to the start-up ecosystem in India.

In this regard, let us understand various facets related to One-person companies and the recent changes introduced in the Budget 2021-22.

Types of Companies in India: The Companies Act, 2013 provides for 3 types of companies depending upon the number of members.

- **One-person company**: Single Member
- **Private Limited Company**: At least 2 members and not more than 200 members.
- **Public Limited Company:** At least 7 members and no limit on maximum members

About One-person Companies: The idea of introducing One-person companies was put forward by **J.J. Irani Committee** Report on Company Law. One-person companies have been provided significant leeway to reduce the compliance burden. For instance, such a company does not need to conduct an **Annual General Meeting**, which is a requirement for other companies.

How is one-person company different from sole proprietorship?

- In case of sole proprietorship mode, person and the company are not considered as separate legal entities. Hence, personal wealth and assets of a person are linked to business. There is unlimited liability of the owner. For example, an individual invests Rs 50,000 in a sole proprietorship. The sole proprietorship then incurs Rs 2 lakh worth bad debt. The individual is personally liable for the entire Rs 2 lakh, even though he only invested Rs 50,000 in the business. This means that a Bank could legally seize the personal assets of the individual in order to pay the debts of the business.
- However, in case of one-person company, the person and the company are considered as separate legal entities. The liability of the person is limited only to its investment.

RECENT CHANGES INTRODUCED IN THE BUDGET

- **Doing away with Restrictions on Capital:** Presently, as per the rules, the company would be treated as One-person company provided its paid-up share capital does not exceed Rs 50 lakhs or its average turnover for the preceding three years does not exceed Rs 2 crore. If the paid-up share capital or the turnover exceeds the threshold, then it can no longer be treated as One-person company. It would be required to get converted into Private limited or Public Limited company.
- The Finance Minister has decided to lift the restrictions on share capital or turnover and has thus enabled them to grow without any restrictions.
- **Eligibility for opening One-Person Companies**: Earlier, only an Indian citizen and an Indian resident could start a single-person company. Now, even the NRIs can also open such companies.

SHIP BREAKING INDUSTRY

#GOVERNMENT POLICIES

PRIMARY SOURCE | The Indian EXPRESS

IN NEWS

In her Budget Speech, the Finance Minister has announced that the Ship Recycling Capacity in India would be doubled by the end of 2024 leading to creation of additional employment opportunities of 1.5 lakh jobs. In this regard, let us understand the various facets of Ship Breaking Industry in India.

GLOBAL SHIP BREAKING INDUSTRY

- The lifespan of a modern shipping vessel is around 25-30 years. Once it has outlived its utility, the ship is broken down/recycled. Earlier, the ship breaking Industry was concentrated in the advanced economies such as US, EU etc. However, over a period of time, the global ship breaking Industry has shifted towards the developing economies such as **Bangladesh, India, Pakistan, China and Turkey**. More than 80% of the shipping vessels are recycled along the beaches of **Alang (Gujarat), Chattogram (Bangladesh) and Gadani (Pakistan).**
- The Asian countries dominate the industry because of cheap labour cost and relatively less stringent environmental and health regulations.

SHIP BREAKING INDUSTRY IN INDIA- SIGNIFICANCE AND ISSUES

- Due to its natural geographical advantage of a high inter-tidal gradient, favourable weather conditions and low labour costs, India has emerged as a leader in terms of both volume and number of ships broken. Ship breaking yards are located in the states of Gujarat, Maharashtra and West Bengal.
- Most ship breaking activity is concentrated in the Alang and Sosiya yards in Gujarat. Alang alone accounts for more than 90 per cent of the ships dismantled in India.

SIGNIFICANCE

- Around 10% of the steel used in India is extracted from the ships.
- Employment generation- more than 55,000 workers alone are employed in Alang.
- Generate Forex revenue.

ISSUES

- **Environmental problems:** Ship breaking leads to release of large amounts of carcinogens and toxic substances such as mercury, lead, sulphuric acid; No proper waste management system; Environmental damage on flora and fauna.
- **Health of the workers**: According to ILO, Shipbreaking is amongst the most dangerous of occupations, with unacceptably high levels of fatalities, injuries and work-related diseases.

SLOWDOWN IN SHIP BREAKING INDUSTRY

- The number of ships coming to India for recycling has declined in the recent past. For example, India's global share of ship breaking Industry reduced from 31% (2016) to 26% (2018).
- One of the most important factors has been the non-compliance of labour and environmental rules. Further, international agencies such as ILO have increasingly emphasised the effective implementation

of international conventions such as **Basel Convention** on the Control of Transboundary Movements of Hazardous Wastes and Their Disposal.

STEPS TAKEN BY INDIA

- **Recycling of Ships Act, 2019**: Through this act, India has acceded to Hong Kong Convention (HKC) which is implemented by International Maritime organization (IMO). The provisions of HKC have also been included in the new Recycling of Ships Act, 2019.
- **Hong Kong International Convention:** The Hong Kong Convention covers the design, construction, operation and maintenance of ships to ensure they can be recycled safely and in an environment-friendly way at the end of their lives. Under the Hong Kong Convention, ships sent for recycling are required to carry an inventory of all hazardous materials on board. Ship recycling facilities are required to provide a "Ship Recycling Plan", specifying how each ship will be recycled, based on its particular characteristics and its inventory of hazardous materials.

PLI SCHEME FOR TELECOM SECTOR

#TELECOM

PRIMARY SOURCE | THE HINDU

IN NEWS

The Union Cabinet has recently decided to extend the Production Linked Incentive (PLI) Scheme for Telecom and Networking Products.

BACKGROUND

- Earlier, as part of Aatma Nirbhar Bharat Package, the Government has already approved PLI schemes for 3 sectors- Mobile Manufacturing and specified electronics components, Active Pharmaceuticals Ingredients (APIs) and Manufacturing of Medical Devices.
- Later Government decided to extend the PLI Scheme to 10 more champion sectors to boost the competitiveness of domestic manufacturing. These sectors include- Textile Products, Food Products, Telecom & Networking Products, Pharmaceuticals Drugs, Automobiles; Auto Components, Electronic/Technology Products, Advance Cell Chemistry Battery, High Efficiency Solar PV Modules, White Goods and Specialty Steel.

DETAILS ABOUT PLI SCHEME

- **Objective:** Boost domestic manufacturing and attract large investments in domestic manufacturing.
- **Incentives**: Extend an incentive of 4% to 7% on incremental sales (over base year of 2019-20) of goods manufactured in India for a period of 5 years.
- **Eligibility**: Incentives are provided under the scheme to only those companies which cross the threshold level in terms of incremental sale of Manufactured Goods and Incremental investment over the base year.
- **Tenure of Scheme**: 5 years

MAIN FEATURES OF SCHEME

- The scheme outlay is Rs. 12,195 Crores over five years. The incentive structure will be as below: -

	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5
MSME	7%	7%	6%	5%	4%
Others	6%	6%	5%	5%	4%

- For MSMEs, one percent (1%) higher incentive is proposed in year 1, year 2 and year 3.
- Minimum Investment threshold for MSME has been kept at Rs. 10 Crores and for others at Rs. 100 Crores.
- Once qualified, the investor will be incentivized up to 20 times of minimum investment threshold enabling them to utilize their unused capacity.
- The Scheme will be operational from 1st April 2021.

Benefits: This scheme will lead to incremental production of around Rs 2.4 Lakh Crores with exports of around Rs 2 Lakh Crores over 5 years. It is expected that scheme will bring investment of more than Rs 3,000 crore and generate huge direct and indirect employment and taxes both.

BILATERAL INVESTMENT TREATIES

#INVESTMENT

PRIMARY SOURCE THE HINDU

IN NEWS

Recently, the Sri Lankan Government decided to pull out of a 2019 agreement with India and Japan that provided for joint development of East Container Terminal (ECT) at the Colombo port. This has once again put the spotlight on the Bilateral Investment Treaties signed by the Indian Government.

In this regard, let us discuss about the Bilateral Investment Treaty and basic provisions of the Model BIT.

What is Bilateral Investment Treaty? Bilateral investment Treaties (BITs) are agreements between two countries for the reciprocal promotion and protection of investments in each other's territories by individuals and companies situated in either State. BITs encourage foreign investors to invest in a State and there by contributing towards overall developments and advancements of the economy. Some of the important features of the BITs are:

- **Fair and Equitable Treatment (FET)**: Mandates States to have a stable and predictable legal framework regulating investments which meets the reasonable expectations of the investors.
- **Full Protection and Security (FPS)**: Mandates States to provide full protection and safety to foreign investments.
- **National Treatment**: The foreign investors should be treated at par with the domestic investors.
- **Most Favourable Nation Treatment (MFN)**: Concession extended to foreign investor of a particular country would be extended to foreign investors of other countries.
- **Expropriation (Taking over property)**: Bars the state from expropriating the foreign investments except under exceptional circumstances.
- **Repatriation of Investment and Returns**: Mandates the states to provide unrestricted power to the foreign investors to repatriate their investments and returns.
- **Investor State Dispute Resolution (ISDS)**: Foreign investors can directly initiate arbitration proceeding against a State without approaching its own government. To handle such a dispute, an ad-hoc tribunal may be set up in accordance with the Arbitration rules of the United Nations Commission on International Trade Law.

Reason for termination of BITs

- The BITs signed by India gave extensive protection to the foreign investment with scant regard for state's interests based on the neoliberal model. For example, a number of foreign corporations slapped ISDS notices against India challenging a wide array of regulatory measures such as the imposition of retrospective taxes (Vodafone case),cancellation of spectrum licences and revocation of telecom licenses.
- These ISDS cases against India led to a fundamental rethink and review of BITs in India leading to the adoption of Model BIT in 2016.

IMPORTANT PROVISIONS OF MODEL BIT

- **Enterprise based definition of investment**: The asset-based definition of the investment under the earlier BITs has been replaced by Enterprise based definition under the model BIT. Asset based definition considers every kind of asset – both movable and immovable including the IPRs as investment and gives protection under treaties. Moving away from an asset-based approach to an enterprise-based approach aims at narrowing the scope of investments to be protected and thus seeks to reduce the number of BIT claims that can be brought against India.
- **Exclusion of MFN treatment**: In recent years, some foreign investors have sued India arguing that they have to get the same beneficial treatment given to companies from other countries. Accordingly, India has dropped MFN Clause from the Model BIT.
- **Conditions for initiating arbitrations at international arbitrations**: The Model BIT stipulate that the aggrieved investor should use all local remedies as well as negotiations and consultations before initiating arbitrations against the host State. Investor can use outside remedies only five years after resorting to all domestic arrangements.
- **Corporate Social Responsibility**: The Model BIT mandates foreign investors to voluntarily adopt

internationally recognized standards of corporate social responsibility.

SOLAR OUTSHINES WIND POWER IN TOTAL CAPACITY

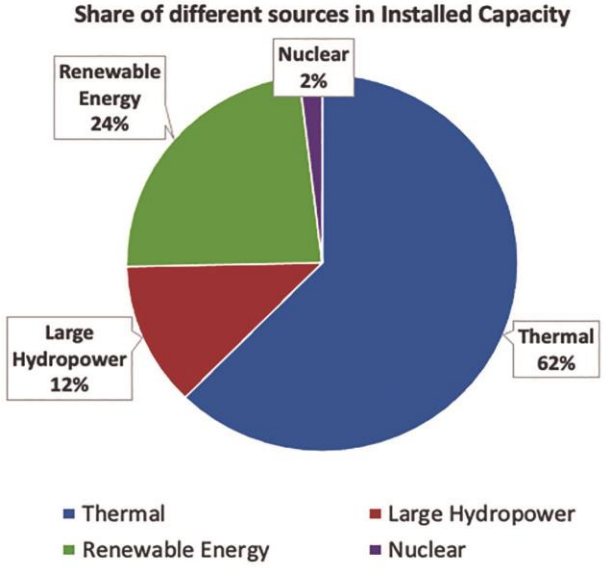
#RENEWABLE ENERGY

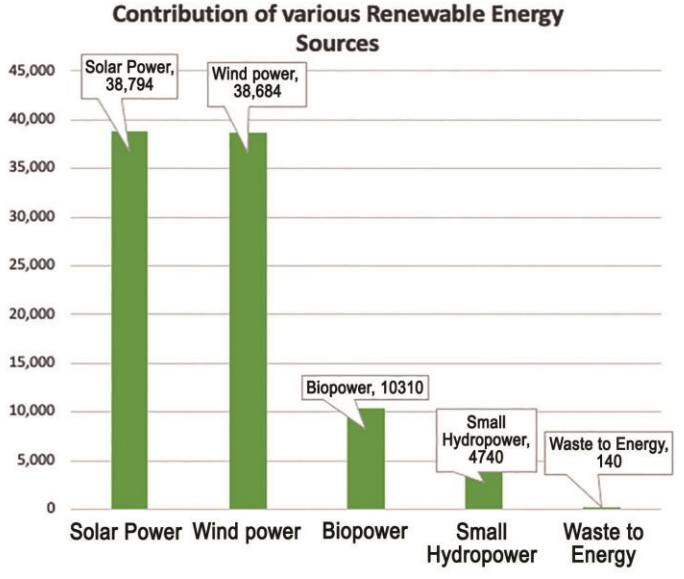
PRIMARY SOURCE BusinessLine

IN NEWS

In a significant development in the renewable energy sector, solar power has overtaken wind power in terms of total installed capacity.

The total Installed power capacity in India is around 3.7 lakh MW.





ACHIEVEMENTS IN RENEWABLE ENERGY SECTOR

- Total Installed Capacity of Renewable energy (excluding large hydropower above 25 MW): 89.6 GW
- Share of Renewable energy (including large hydropower above 25 MW) in total installed capacity: 36%
- Share of Renewable energy (including large hydropower above 25 MW) in total electricity generation: 26%
- During the last 6 years, renewable energy capacity has grown by 2.5 times and solar energy by over 13 times.
- A decade ago, the solar segment had a capacity of just 18 MW, while wind power's installed capacity was at 13,000 MW. However, as of January 31, 2021, the total installed capacity of solar power stood at 38,794 MW. The total wind power capacity was 38,684 MW.
- India now has the 4th largest wind power capacity in the world.
- **Top 3 States in Installed Wind Power (as on 31st Dec 2019):** Tamil Nadu, Gujarat and Maharashtra
- **Top 3 States in Installed Solar Power (as on 31st Dec 2019):** Karnataka, Rajasthan and Tamil Nadu

INITIATIVES TO BOOST SOLAR ENERGY

NATIONAL SOLAR MISSION

Target: 100 GW of Solar Power by the end of 2022

Strategy:

- Solar Park and Ultra Mega Solar Power Projects: 40,000 MW of Solar power through 50 Solar Parks (Capacity of 500 MW and Above).
- Grid-connected Roof up Solar Programme: Target of 40,000 MW. Implemented through DISCOMs.

PM-KUSUM SCHEME

- Setting up of 10,000 MW of Grid-Connected Solar and Other Renewable energy plants on Barren/Uncultivable land--> Sell Power to DISCOMs and earn Income.
- Off-Grid Areas: Replacement of diesel agriculture pump sets with 20 lakh Solar Agriculture Pumps--> Reduce the dependence of farmers on diesel and meet their irrigation needs.
- Grid-connected Areas: Replacement of diesel agriculture pump sets with 15 lakh Solar Agriculture Pumps--> Use the generated solar power to meet the irrigation needs and the excess solar power will be sold to DISCOMs.

NATIONAL WIND-SOLAR HYBRID POLICY

- **Rationale**: Superimposition of wind and solar resource maps shows that there are large areas where both wind and solar have high to moderate potential. The existing wind farms have scope of adding solar PV capacity and similarly there may be wind potential in the vicinity of existing solar PV plant.
- **Strategy**: Hybrid System--> Wind Turbine Generators (WTGs) and Solar PV systems can operate on same land. However, for being considered as Hybrid system, the Installed capacity of at least one of them should be minimum 25%.
- **Atal Jyoti Yojana (AJAY) Phase-II:** To illuminate dark regions through installation of solar streetlights. Implemented by Energy Efficiency Services Limited (EESL).
- **Public Sector Undertaking (CPSU) Scheme:** A scheme for setting up 12 GW Grid- Connected Solar PV Power Projects by Public Sector Undertakings with domestic cells and modules is under implementation. Viability Gap Funding support is provided under this scheme.
- **Production linked Incentive scheme** for manufacturing of high-efficiency solar PV Modules: Close to 75 per cent of India's solar power capacity is built on Chinese solar cells and modules. Hence, the PLI scheme is expected to ensure Aatma Nirbhar Bharat in solar energy sector.

PRELIMS SNIPPETS

NATIONAL COAL INDEX

In June 2020, the Ministry of Coal unveiled National Coal Index. The launch of the Index comes behind the backdrop of the decision of the Government to auction coal mines on revenue sharing basis. The Index is used to calculate Government's revenue share from the auction of coal mines.

DETAILS ABOUT NATIONAL COAL INDEX (NCI)

- Price index which reflects the change in the prices of coal in a particular month in comparison to the fixed base year (Base year: 2017-18).
- Index is calculated by taking into account the prices of coal from all the channels- Notified prices, auctioned prices and import prices.
- NCI is composed of a set of **five sub-indices**: **three for Non-Coking Coal and two for Coking Coal.** The three sub-indices for Non-Coking Coal are combined to arrive at the Index for Non-Coking Coal and the two sub-indices for Coking Coal are combined to arrive at the Index for Coking Coal. Thus, indices are separate for Non-coking and Coking Coal.
- Developed by the **Indian Statistical Institute, Kolkata.**

GOBARDHAN SCHEME

Recently, the Government has launched Unified Portal of Gobardhan to promote Gobardhan scheme and track real time progress.

ABOUT GOBARDHAN (GALVANIZING ORGANIC BIO-AGRO RESOURCES - DHAN) SCHEME (2018)

Aim: Manage and convert cattle dung and solid waste in farms to compost, bio-gas and bio-CNG. Important component of Swachh Bharat Mission (Gramin) of managing solid and liquid waste.

Scope:

- Support villages safely manage their cattle waste and agricultural waste
- Support communities convert their waste to biogas and fertilizer
- Promote environmental sanitation and curb vector borne diseases through effective disposal of waste in rural areas.

Implementation: Ministry of Jal Shakti

WORLD EMPLOYMENT AND SOCIAL OUTLOOK REPORT

Recently, the International Labour Organisation (ILO) has released its latest edition of "World Employment and Social Outlook" report. This report provides an overview of global and regional trends in employment, unemployment, labour force participation and productivity.

HIGHLIGHTS OF THE REPORT

- The global unemployment rate stood at 5.4 per cent in 2019 and is projected to remain essentially the same over the next two years.
- Mismatch between labour supply and demand extends far beyond the 188 million unemployed across the world in 2019.
- Projected lower economic growth and the lack of inclusiveness are very likely to impair the ability of lower-income countries to reduce poverty and improve working conditions.
- Even when people have a job, there remain significant deficiencies in work quality.

OTHER IMPORTANT REPORTS BY ILO

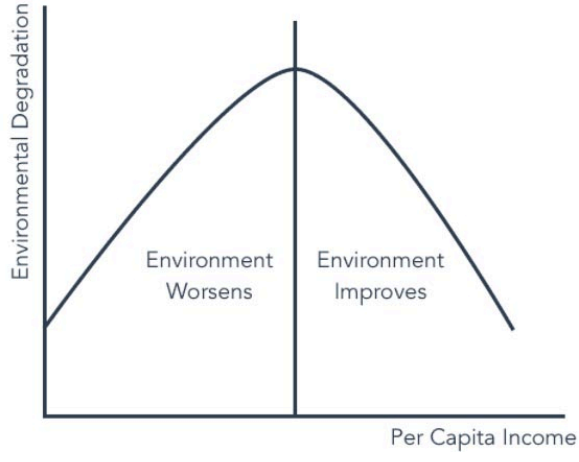
- Global Wage Report
- World Social Protection Report

ENVIRONMENTAL KUZNETS CURVE HYPOTHESIS

A group of scientists at IIT-Madras has found out that in developing countries, the Environmental Kuznets curve hypothesis does not hold good.

ABOUT ENVIRONMENTAL KUZNETS CURVE HYPOTHESIS

The environmental Kuznets curve suggests that economic development initially leads to a deterioration in the environment, but after a certain level of economic growth, a society begins to improve its relationship with the environment and levels of environmental degradation reduces. From a very simplistic viewpoint, it can suggest that economic growth is good for the environment.



However, critics argue there is no guarantee that economic growth will lead to an improved environment – in fact, the opposite is often the case.

Note

- **Kuznets curve:** Relationship between economic growth and inequality. It is inverted U shaped meaning that as initially economic growth leads to greater inequality, followed later by the reduction of inequality.
- **Laffer Curve:** Relationship between Tax rates (on the horizontal) and Tax revenue collected (on the vertical).

It is an inverted U shaped curve, showing that as tax rates increase, first the revenue increase, hits a maximum at a particular rate. Further increase in the tax rate leads to decline in the tax revenue.

STARTUP INDIA SEED FUND SCHEME

The Government has recently unveiled the 'Start-up India Seed Fund Scheme (SISFS)' to provide financial assistance to start-ups. The Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT) under the Ministry will implement the scheme. The scheme will be implemented for the next 4 years and is expected to support 3600 start-ups in India.

Note: An entity is considered as a Start-up for up to ten years (earlier 7 years) from the date of its incorporation/ registration, with an annual turnover not exceeding Rs 100 crores (earlier Rs 25 crores) for any of the financial years since incorporation/ registration.

APPOINTMENT OF NEW WTO CHIEF

Nigerian economist Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala was recently appointed as the 7th Director-General of WTO. She is the first woman and first African to be appointed as the head of WTO.

STRUCTURE OF WTO

- The **Ministerial Conference**, comprising of representatives of all the member countries heads the WTO and is the highest policy making body. It meets at least once every two years.
- In the WTO, there is a **General Council** composed of representatives of all the members, which oversees the operation of the agreements and ministerial decisions on a regular basis. It also acts as a **Dispute Settlement Body and a Trade Policy Review Body**, each with its own chairman.
- The **Director General (DG)**, appointed for period of four years by the Ministerial Conference, heads the Secretariat of the WTO.

PRACTICE QUESTIONS

MCQS

Q1. Which among the following is/are the likely impacts of the Operation Twist carried out by the RBI?

1. Increase in the Bond prices of short-term Government Securities (G-Secs)
2. Decrease in the yields of long-term G-Secs

Select the correct answer using the code given below:

(a) 1 only (b) 2 only
(c) Both 1 and 2 (d) Neither 1 nor 2

Q2. Which among the following agencies publishes the "World Employment and Social Outlook Report"?

(a) International Labour Organisation (ILO)
(b) World Bank
(c) IMF
(d) OECD

Q3. The Kuznets curve shows the nature of relationship between?

(a) Tax rate and Tax Revenue

(b) Inflation and Unemployment
(c) Economic Growth and Inequality
(d) Money supply and Economic Growth

Q4. With reference to 15th Finance Commission recommendations, consider the following statements:

1. The States' share of taxes has remained unchanged at 42%.
2. The Income Distance Criteria has been given highest weightage for the horizontal distribution of taxes among the states.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

(a) 1 only (b) 2 only
(c) Both 1 and 2 (d) Neither 1 nor 2

Q5. Consider the following statements:

1. The Asset Reconstruction Company is registered with the RBI under the provisions of Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code (IBC)
2. The SARFAESI Act provides for the issuance of Security Receipts by the Asset Reconstruction Companies.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

(a) 1 only (b) 2 only
(c) Both 1 and 2 (d) Neither 1 nor 2

DESCRIPTIVE QUESTIONS

Q1. The Setting up of Asset Reconstruction Company (ARC) in the Union Budget 2021-22 would counter the Twin Balance Sheet Problem of the Banking sector and boost credit creation. Critically Examine.

Q2. India needs to learn from its past mistakes to ensure the success of the newly proposed National Bank for Financing Infrastructure and Development (NaBFID). Discuss.

Answers: *1-b, 2-a, 3-c, 4-b, 5-b*

DRAFT NATIONAL POLICY ON MIGRANT WORKERS

#VULNERABLE SECTIONS #MIGRANT WORKERS #SOCIAL JUSTICE

PRIMARY SOURCE THE HINDU | SECONDARY SOURCE The Indian EXPRESS

IN NEWS

NITI Aayog has prepared a draft national migrant labour policy.Last year's migrant crisis sent 10 million labourers home, according to numbers provided to Parliament by Minister of State (Independent Charge) of Labour and Employment.

According to International Organization for Migration a person who moves away from his or her place of usual residence, whether within a country or across an international border, temporarily or permanently, and for a variety of reasons is a migrant.

THE STATUS OF INTER-STATE MIGRATION IN INDIA

- The **Economic Survey of India 2017** estimates that the number of inter-state migration in India was close to **9 million** annually between 2011 and 2016.
- As per 2011 census, out of 1,210 million people in the country, 455.8 million (about 37%) were reported as migrants of place of last residence.
- Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Rajasthan and Madhya Pradesh accounted for 50% of India's total inter-state migrants.

Draft national policy on migrant workers says that '*Migration should be acknowledged as an integral part of development*'. Migrants are seen, more and more, as agents of development.

- The evidence on the positive impacts of internal migration in terms of poverty reduction is very clear in South-East and East Asia.
- There is also evidence that mobility is critical to livelihoods in Africa.
- Report of the Working Group on Migration, released in January 2017 by the then Ministry of Housing and Urban Poverty Alleviation argued that ***the movement from agriculture to manufacturing and services was inherently linked to the success of migration in the country***.
- It is also evident that migration can have multiplier effects on the entire sending area through stimulating land and labour markets, increased agricultural production and improved nutrition, health and education.
- They could strengthen cooperation between home and host societies and contribute to development, not only through remittances, investment and entrepreneurial activities, but also through transfer of **newly developed skills, knowledge and technologies.**
- Controls on population movement are likely to hamper economic growth and poverty reduction
- ***Government policies should not hinder but seek to facilitate internal migration.***

A RIGHTS-BASED APPROACH

- The draft describes two approaches to policy design: one focussed on cash transfers, special quotas, and reservations; the other which "enhances the agency and capability of the community and thereby remove aspects that come in the way of an individual's own natural ability to thrive".
- The policy rejects a **handout approach**, opting instead for a rights-based framework. It seeks "to remove restrictions on true agency and potential of

the migrant workers"; the goal, it says, "should not be to provide temporary or permanent economic or social aids", which is "a rather limited approach".

- **Political inclusion** of migrant workers so they can demand their entitlements. Political exclusion – their facing hurdles in voting — leaves migrants "unable to make political demands for entitlements or seek reforms." Mechanisms to enable voting of migrant workers will enhance ***accountability of political leadership*** towards welfare of migrant workers of their respective states.

ISSUES WITH EXISTING LAW

- The 2017 report argued that **specific protection legislation for migrant workers was unnecessary**. **Migrant workers should be integrated with all worker** as part of an overarching framework that covers regular and contractual work.
- The report discussed the limitations of **The Inter State Migrant Workers Act, 1979**, which was designed to protect labourers from exploitation by contractors by safeguarding their right to non-discriminatory wages, travel and displacement allowances, and suitable working conditions. So to get the benefits from Inter-state Migrant Workmen (ISMW) Act, 1979 a migrant worker should be recruited by licensed contractor. But unfortunately most of the migrant workers are not working under licensed contractors.
- Also, the Act is only applicable to any establishment which has five or more inter-State migrant workers as employees which again leaves a significant number of workers. Migrants from establishments with less than five migrant employees also cease to be migrants, legally.
- The 2017 report questioned this approach, given the size of the country's unorganised sector. It called for **a comprehensive law for these workers, which would form the legal basis for an architecture of social protection.**
- The NITI Aayog's policy draft too, mentions that the **Ministry of Labour and Employment should amend the 1979 Act for "effective utilisation to protect migrants".**

INSTITUTIONAL MECHANISM

- The NITI draft lays down institutional mechanisms to **coordinate between Ministries, states, and local departments to implement programmes for migrants.** It identifies the **Ministry of Labour and Employment as the nodal Ministry** for implementation of policies, and asks it to create **a special unit to help converge the activities of other Ministries.** This unit would manage **migration resource centres in high migration zones**, a **national labour Helpline**, **links of worker households to government schemes**, and **inter-state migration management bodies.**
- **Migration focal points should be created in various Ministries**. On the inter-state migration management bodies, it says that **labour departments of source and destination states along major migration corridors, should work together through the migrant worker cells. Labour officers from source states can be deputed to destinations –** e.g., Bihar's experiment to have a joint labour commissioner at Bihar Bhavan in New Delhi.
- **Setting up inter-state coordination mechanisms** to cover the nation's key migration corridors: Uttar Pradesh and Mumbai; Bihar and Delhi; Western Odisha and Andhra Pradesh; Rajasthan and Gujarat, and Odisha and Gujarat; **embedding a migration wing in each state's labour department**, getting source states and destination states to work with each other.
- The policy draft describes a lack of administrative capacity to handle issues of exploitation. State labour departments have little engagement with migration issues, and are in "halting human trafficking mode", the draft says. "**The local administration, given the usual constraints of manpower, is not in a position to monitor… (This) has become the breeding ground for middlemen to thrive on the situation and entrap migrants**."

INTER-MINISTERIAL COORDINATION

- The draft asks the Ministries of Panchayati Raj, Rural Development, and Housing and Urban Affairs to use Tribal Affairs migration data to help create migration resource centres in high migration zones. It asks the

Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship to focus on skill-building at these centres.

- The Ministry of Education should take measures under the Right to Education Act to mainstream migrant children's education, to map migrant children, and to provide local-language teachers in migrant destinations.
- The Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs should address issues of night shelters, short-stay homes, and seasonal accommodation for migrants in cities.
- The National Legal Services authority (NALSA) and Ministry of Labour should set up grievance handling cells and fast track legal responses for trafficking, minimum wage violations, and workplace abuses and accidents for migrant workers.

MIGRANT WORKER ADMINISTRATION

- Migrants should be the target of **Disaster Risk Reduction (DDR) programmes** in urban centres.
- Access to health and other social protection programmes should be portable across state borders.
- Skill mapping; using Aadhaar to avail of social security schemes, psycho-social assistance through a national helpline.
- The draft flags how a fragmented labour market obscures supply chains and relationships between business owners and workers. "The existing gap in the **unionization of migrant workers** is also an important reason for the precarious nature of their employment," it says.

THE IMPORTANCE OF DATA

- Both the 2017 report and the new draft stress the need for credible data.
- The draft calls for a central database to help employers "fill the gap between demand and supply" and ensure "maximum benefit of social welfare schemes". It asks the **Ministries and the Census office to be consistent with the definitions of migrants and subpopulations**, **capture seasonal and circular migrants**, and **incorporate migrant-specific variables in existing surveys**.
- Both documents see **limited merit in Census data that comes only once a decade**. The 2017 report called on the Registrar General of India to release migration data no more than a year after the initial tabulation, and to include sub-district level, village level, and caste data. It also asked the **National Sample Survey Office to include questions related to migration in the periodic labour force survey, and to carry out a separate survey on migration.**

WAYS TO STEM MIGRATION

Even as it underlines the key role of migration in development, the draft recommends steps to stem migration; this is an important difference with the 2017 report.

- The draft asks source states to **raise minimum wages** to "bring major shift in local livelihood of tribals… (that) may result in stemming migration to some extent".
- Programmes such as MNREGA and State Rural Livelihood Mission are meant to check out-migration by tribals but that hasn't quite happened, says the draft. A reason for this, it says, is that tribals are not "actively included" in skill development schemes and were not able to access them because of "lack of awareness and tedious paper work and processes." So **the policy calls for the state's Tribal department to have one inspector at the block level and Labour one at the district level**.
- The absence of **community building organisations (CBO)** and administrative staff in the source states has hindered access to development programmes, pushing tribals towards migration, the draft says. The "**long term plan" for CBOs and panchayats** should be to "alleviate distress migration policy initiatives" by aiming "for a more pro-poor development strategy in the sending areas…that can strengthen the livelihood base in these areas".
- Alongside the long-term goal, policies should "**promote the role of panchayats to aid migrant workers**" and **integrate urban and rural policies** to improve the conditions of migration. **Panchayats should maintain a database of migrant workers, issue identity cards and pass books, and provide "migration management and governance" through training, placement, and social-security benefit assurance,** the draft says.

BUDGET & EDUCATION

#EDUCATION #LEARNING OUTCOME #SKILL DEVELOPMENT

PRIMARY SOURCE pib SECONDARY SOURCE THE HINDU

SCHOOL EDUCATION

- 15,000 Schools to be qualitatively strengthened by operationalizing all components of NEP in them. These schools will emerge as exemplar schools in their regions, handholding and mentoring other schools to achieve the ideals of the New Education Policy.
- 100 new Sainik Schools to be opened
- These schools will be run in partnership with NGOs/Private Schools/State Owned Schools etc. Sainik schools provide schooling opportunities in 'CBSE Plus' type of educational environment by involving. All 100 schools will be affiliated to Sainik School Society.
- Aim of establishing Sainik Schools is to prepare children academically, physically and mentally for entry into the National Defence Academy and to develop qualities of body, mind and character which will enable the students to become good and useful citizens
- At present, there are 33 Sainik Schools functional. From the academic season, 2021-22 female students are also eligible for admission to Sainik schools from Class VI.

HIGHER EDUCATION

- **Higher Education Commission of India** announced earlier and also New Education Policy will be operationalized and legislated.
- HECI will replace the current higher education regulatory framework headed by UGC. It is proposed to regulate the entire higher education sector except Legal and Architecture.
  - It will have 4 separate wings for **standard-setting**, **accreditation**, **regulation** and **funding.**
- Many Indian cities have research institutions, universities and colleges. However, these institutions do not collaborate much. To promote greater synergy and promote an ecosystem, 9 such cities will be chosen where umbrella structures will be created for these institutions to collaborate, while also retaining their internal autonomy. A **Glue Grant** has been created for this.

EKLAVYA MODEL RESIDENTIAL SCHOOLS

750 **Eklavya Model Residential Schools (EMRS)** to be established in tribal areas. The unit cost provided for establishing such schools will be increased to Rs. 38 crores from earlier Rs 20 crore and Rs 48 crore for establishing EMRS in hilly areas.

- They are established to impart quality education to ST children in remote areas. These schools focus not only on academic education but on all round development.
- Each school has a capacity of 480 students catering to students from class VI to XII.
- Every block with more than 50% tribal population and at least 20,000 tribal persons to have a EMRS.
- Eklavya schools will be on par with Navodaya Vidyalaya and will have special facilities for preserving local art and culture besides providing training in sports and skill development.
- **Ministry of Tribal Affairs** is nodal ministry for the scheme.

REVAMPED POST MATRIC SCHOLARSHIP SCHEME FOR SCHEDULED CASTE STUDENTS

It is a scholarship scheme to be provided to Scheduled Caste students who plan to take onwards education after class X. The scheme is implemented by the **Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment.**

SKILL DEVELOPMENT

- **National Apprenticeship Promotion Scheme (NAPS)**: To realign the scheme for providing:
  - Post-education apprenticeship
  - Training of graduates and diploma holders in Engineering

NAPS is a scheme under Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship which provides incentives to enterprises to engage apprentices by sharing of stipend to maximum limit of Rs 1500 and sharing of basic training cost by Rs 7500 per apprentice. Earlier only ITI Pass outs, ITI Dual mode trainees, PM Kaushal Vikas Yojana pass outs and freshers were eligible to be engaged as apprentices under the scheme. Now, post-education apprenticeship and apprenticeship for diploma and degree holders in engineering is also allowed under the scheme.

- Proposal to amend **the Apprenticeship Act** with a view to enhance apprenticeship opportunities.
- India and UAE are working to benchmark skill qualifications, assessment and certification, accompanied by deployment of certified workforce.
- Japan and India are working on **Training Inter Training Program (TITP)** to transfer Japanese industrial and vocational skills.

COVID-19 PERFORMANCE INDEX

#COVID PREPAREDNESS #HEALTH

PRIMARY SOURCE | THE HINDU

IN NEWS

The COVID-19 "performance index" has been put together by the Lowy Institute, an Australian think tank. The study compared the performance of countries in managing the pandemic on six parameters:

1. ***Confirmed cases***
2. ***Cases per million population***
3. ***Deaths***
4. ***Deaths per million people***
5. ***Confirmed cases as proportion of tests and***
6. ***tests per thousand.***

PERFORMANCE OF VARIOUS COUNTRIES

- New Zealand, Vietnam and Taiwan have been ranked the top three spots, respectively.
- **India has been ranked 86th.**
- Sri Lanka was the best faring nation in South Asia, ranking 10.
- Maldives was at 25, Pakistan at 69, Nepal at 70, and Bangladesh at 84.
- The lowest score was given to Brazil.
- Mexico, Colombia, Iran and the United States too featured among the bottom five countries in terms of performance.

In 2019 ***Global Health Security Index,*** *(prepared by the Johns Hopkins Centre for Health Security and the Economist Intelligence Unit)* India is ranked 57th out of 195 countries.

GENERAL OBSERVATIONS

- While some countries managed the coronavirus crisis better than others, the index noted that most countries "outcompeted each other only by degrees of underperformance".
- Levels of economic development and differences in political systems didn't have as much of an impact on coronavirus response as expected.
- On an average, countries with authoritarian establishments had no "prolonged advantage" in containing the virus.
- It was found that democracies had "marginally" more success than other governments in their handling of the pandemic.
- There was little "discernible difference" in a country's performance by population size.
- Smaller countries with populations of fewer than 10 million people consistently outperformed their larger counterparts throughout 2020, although this lead narrowed slightly towards the end of the examined period.
- "Systemic factors alone — a society's regional provenance, political system, economic development, or size — cannot account fully for the differences observed in global crisis responses…Policy choices and political circumstances of the day appear to be just as important in shaping national responses to the pandemic."

THE MAHATMA AND THE EMPOWERMENT OF THE OTHER

#SOCIAL EMPOWERMENT

PRIMARY SOURCE THE HINDU SECONDARY SOURCE NCERT

CONTEXT

Studying about Mahatma Gandhi is very important for Civil Service Exam. UPSC keep asking question on Mahatma Gandhi in Prelims, Mains and Interview.

MAHATMA'S ECONOMIC IDEAS

- Mahatma Gandhi's economic views were **humanitarian** in nature, where the social and economic prosperity of citizens who were reeling under the burden of unemployment, inhumane working conditions, and stagnant agricultural growth were his priority.
- Along with social well-being, he also focused on the welfare of the environment, thus laying the basic concept of sustainable development.
- The following points highlight the top ten economic ideas of Mahatma Gandhi:

1. **Sustainable development** as the basis of growth.
2. Non-Violent Economy with the concept of **Labour Welfare**.
3. **Decentralisation**: Entirely against the use of machines. He advocated labour-intensive technology.
4. **Khadi Industry**: For Gandhiji, production of Khadi meant that for the common man, it was a source of steady income, it did not require capital investment, it did not depend upon monsoon, and helped in solving the problem of unemployment.
5. Regeneration of Villages or Village **Sarvodaya** (self-sufficient village economy).
6. The **Trusteeship Doctrine** which provides a means of transforming the present capitalist order of society into an egalitarian one
7. **Food Problem & Law of Bread Labour**: He believed that every individual should curtail his or her requirements of food to the minimum and as far as possible. The law of Bread-labour emphasized that man must earn his bread by his labor.
8. **Population:** Gandhiji opposed the use of contraceptives; he was in favor of birth control through self-control and not through the use of artificial methods. He considered self-control as the "infallible sovereign remedy".
9. **Prohibition:** According to Gandhiji, the use of coffee, tea, tobacco, and alcohol was detrimental to the mental, physical, and moral development of an individual. He firmly believed that Western materialism and industrialization had increased human wants.
10. **Exchange Economy:** Gandhian idea on the exchange economy was based on the swadeshi spirit.

VIEWS OF GANDHIJI

- **Harmony:** By communal harmony, Gandhiji did not mean merely paying lip service to it. He meant it to be an unbreakable bond of unity. In the religious context Gandhi emphasized that communal harmony has to be based on equal respect for all religions.

  Everyone, Gandhi said, must have the same regard for other faiths as one had for one's own. Such respect would not only remove religious rifts but lead to a realization of the fact that religion was a stabilizing force, not a disturbing element.
- **Views on Education:** He regarded education as the light of life and the very source from which was created an awareness of oneness. Gandhi believed that the universality of ethics can best be realized through the universalisation of education, and that such universalisation was the spring board for national integration.
- **Humanisation on Education:** Gandhi pleaded for the humanization of knowledge for immunization against the ideas of distrust among the communities of the nations and the nationalities of the world.

  His mass contact programme was specifically aimed at generating a climate of confidence and competition

and eliminating misgiving and misconceptions, conflicts and confrontation.

POLITICAL PHILOSOPHY OF GANDHIJI

*"**Politics bereft of religion is absolute dirt, ever to be shunned**".* For me there is no politics without religion, not the religion of the superstition and the blind religion that hates and fight, but the universal religion of tolerance. Politics without morality is a thing to be avoided. As per Mahatma Gandhi *anger and intolerance are the enemies of correct understanding.*

PHILOSOPHIES OF GANDHIJI

i. Principle of *Sarvodaya through Antyodaya*

ii. *Philosophy of Trusteeship* – According to Gandhi ji each businessman should take enough wealth to live honorably. He should distribute the remaining wealth back to the society. Trusteeship provides a means of transforming the present capitalist order of society into an egalitarian one.

iii. *Gandhiji's Talisman* – to resolve ethical dilemma

iv. Focus on weak and vulnerable – Antyodaya, trusteeship, Gandhiji's Talisman

v. Lok Niti over rajniti

vi. Emphasis on *duties over right*

vii. **Seven sins** –

1. Wealth Without Work
2. Pleasure Without Conscience
3. Knowledge Without Character
4. Commerce (Business) Without Morality (Ethics)
5. Science Without Humanity
6. Religion Without Sacrifice
7. Politics Without Principle

CONCEPT OF RAMA RAJYA

Trusteeship to help to achieve the goal of Rama Rajya. As per Mahatma Gandhi, Rama Rajya implies an ideal society, where values of justice, equality, idealism and sacrifice are practices. It is the kingdom of God on earth.

Attributes of Ram Rajya

- ✓ There is no war
- ✓ *Ruler is not only an ideal king but also ideal in personal sphere. Lord Ram is called Maryada Purushuttam – best among all men and always maintains decorum*. (Ethics in public and personal life)
- ✓ The rule is based truth with dharma in its foundation.
- ✓ Harmony with nature
- ✓ People should be virtuous and contended.
- ✓ They are free from disease, greed and sorrow.
- ✓ The real Rama Rajya implies kingdom of people with absolute control over five sense organs, five motor organs, mind, subconscious mind, intellect and ego with Ram dwelling in his heart.

"*If humanity is to progress, Gandhi is inescapable. He lived, thought, acted and inspired by the vision of humanity evolving toward a world of peace and harmony.*" - Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

QUOTATION OF GANDHIJI

- ✓ *"As human beings, our greatness lies not so much in being able to remake the world - that is the myth of the atomic age - as in being able to remake ourselves".*
- ✓ *"You must not lose faith in humanity. Humanity is an ocean; if a few drops of the ocean are dirty, the ocean does not become dirty."*
- ✓ *"The greatness of a nation and its moral progress can be judged by the way its animals are treated."*
- ✓ *"Nobody can hurt me without my permission." (**Emotional intelligence**)*
- ✓ *"Earth provides enough to satisfy every man's needs, but not every man's greed."*
- ✓ *"The weak can never forgive. Forgiveness is the attribute of the strong."*
- ✓ *"Happiness is when what you think, what you say, and what you do are in harmony." (Integrity)*
- ✓ *Constant development is the law of life, and a man who always tries to maintain his dogmas in order to appear consistent drives himself into a false position."*
- ✓ *The best way to find yourself is to lose yourself in the service of others.*
- ✓ *A man is but the product of his thoughts; what he thinks, he becomes.*
- ✓ *"Your beliefs become your thoughts, Your thoughts become your words, Your words become your actions,*

Your actions become your habits, Your habits become your values, Your values become your destiny."

- ✓ *"What difference does it make to the dead, the orphans and the homeless, whether the mad destruction is wrought under the name of totalitarianism or in the holy name of liberty or democracy?"*
- ✓ *"Silence becomes cowardice when occasion demands speaking out the whole truth and acting accordingly".*

STATUS OF SANITATION WORKERS

#MANUAL SCAVENGING #SOCIAL JUSTICE

PRIMARY SOURCE THE HINDU SECONDARY SOURCE pib

IN NEWS

The last five years recorded a nearly 28% increase in persons dying while cleaning sewers or sceptic tanks. Despite laws, workers in the field in India still face stigma and are devoid of essential rights.

STATUS OF SANITATION WORKERS IN INDIA

- According to the National Commission of Safai Karamcharis (NCSK), a total of 53,598 people, of which 29,923 were in Uttar Pradesh alone, had been identified as engaged in manual scavenging in 2018.
- Though the construction of dry latrines has drastically reduced, the number of deaths in manholes, sewers and septic tanks continues to remain high.
- The present government had plans to amend the 2013 Act to completely mechanise the cleaning of sewers and manholes and build new sewers. But neither the past nor the present amendment addresses the issue of labour safety.
- Even the Swachh Bharat Abhiyan does not address the issue of labour rights and the stigma attached to sanitation.
- As a matter of fact, in Tamil Nadu, all political parties have trade unions for government servants, except for sanitation workers.
- Unlike other labour forces, sanitation workers do not have a separate rule-book that lays down guidelines for their work timings, holidays, a proper place for roll call, removal from duty, etc.

STATE INTERVENTION

- In 1993, the Government of India enacted the **Employment of Manual Scavengers and Construction of Dry Latrines (Prohibition) Act –**
  - The act prohibits the employment of manual scavengers, manual cleaning of sewers and septic tanks **without protective equipment**, and the construction of insanitary latrines.
  - It seeks to rehabilitate manual scavengers and provide for their alternative employment.
  - Each local authority, cantonment board and railway authority is responsible for surveying insanitary latrines within its jurisdiction. They shall also construct a number of sanitary community latrines.
  - It provided for imprisonment of up to a year and a fine.

Criticism of the act

- Prohibition of Employment of Manual Scavengers and their Rehabilitation Act, 2013 defined 'manual scavenger' as a person engaged in or employed for manually carrying human excreta. This excluded sanitation worker entering a manhole from the ambit of law.
- The act defined dry latrine as "latrine other than a water-seal latrine". Manual scavenging is not just a practice related to dry latrines, but also to insanitary latrines and open defecation.

- **Prohibition of Employment as Manual Scavengers and their Rehabilitation Act, 2013**, which is wider in scope and importance, acknowledging the urgency of rehabilitating manual scavengers.
  - The act seeks to reinforce this ban by prohibiting manual scavenging in all forms and ensures the rehabilitation of manual scavengers to be identified through a mandatory survey.
  - **Key features of the Act**
    - Prohibits the construction or maintenance of insanitary toilets.

- Prohibits the engagement or employment of anyone as a manual scavenger violations could result in a years' imprisonment or a fine of INR 50,000 or both.
- Prohibits a person from being engaged or employed for hazardous cleaning of a sewer or a septic tank.
- Offences under the Act are cognizable and non-bailable.
- Calls for a survey of manual scavengers in urban and rural areas within a time-bound framework.

- A Supreme Court order in March, 2014, makes it mandatory for the government to identify all those who died in sewerage work since 1993 and provide Rs.10 lakh each as compensation to their families.
- The Government of India has adopted a two-pronged strategy of eliminating insanitary latrines through demolition and conversion into sanitary latrines and developing a comprehensive rehabilitation package for manual scavengers through a survey.
- A comprehensive rehabilitation package has recently been put together that includes livelihoods and skill development, access to education for children of former manual scavengers and alternate livelihoods.
- Establishment of **National Commission for Safai Karamcharis** to look into matters concerning the Safai Karamcharis' welfare.
  - The National Commission for Safai Karamcharis (NCSK) was constituted on 12th August 1994 as a **statutory body** by an Act of Parliament viz. 'National Commission for Safai Karamcharis Act, 1993'.
  - The act "The National Commission for Safai Karamcharis Act, 1993" lapsed in February 2004.
  - The **Commission is acting as a non-statutory body** of the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment whose tenure is extended from time to time through Government Resolutions.
- The **National Safai Karamcharis Finance and Development Corporation (NSKFDC)** has recently issued advisory to municipalities, panchayats urging them to ensure that all sanitation workers are provided Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) to remain safe during the novel coronavirus pandemic.
  - It is a wholly owned Government of India Undertaking under the **Ministry of Social Justice & Empowerment**.
  - It was set up in 1997 as a "Not for Profit" Company under Section 25 of the Companies Act, 1956 (now Section 8 of Companies Act 2013).
  - It is an apex Corporation for the all-round socio-economic upliftment of the Safai Karamcharis, Scavengers and their dependents throughout India, through various loan and non-loan based schemes.
  - NSKFDC has been designated as the Nodal Agency for implementation of the Central Sector Self Employment Scheme for Rehabilitation of Manual Scavengers (SRMS) under the aegis of the Ministry of Social Justice & Empowerment.
  - NSKFDC is also playing a vital role in elimination of manual scavenging
- **Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs launched Safai Mitra Suraksha challenge:** Under the challenge, all states/UTs pledged to make sewer-cleaning mechanised by April 2021, promote citizen awareness and prevent Hazardous Cleaning of Sewers and Septic Tanks. 243 cities will be awarded under three sub-categories based on population: up to 3 lakh, 3-10 lakh and over 10 lakh.

RISING INEQUALITY

#SOCIAL EQUALITY #SOCIAL JUSTICE

PRIMARY SOURCE THE HINDU

IN NEWS

There has been increased social inequality during COVID which has also been reflective in the latest Oxfam International's annual report on inequality for 2021, titled as 'The Inequality Virus'. COVID-19 has also exposed fractures in our social fabric and United Nations Secretary General, Antonio Guterres has described COVID-19 like an X-Ray revealing fractures in the fragile skeleton of the societies we have built.

MAJOR HIGHLIGHTS OF OXFAM REPORT

- **Easy consolidation for Billionaires -** It took just nine months for the fortunes of the top 1,000 billionaires to

return to their pre-pandemic highs, while for the world's poorest, recovery could take more than a decade.

- **The increase in the wealth of the 10 richest billionaires** since the crisis began is more than enough to prevent anyone on Earth from falling into poverty because of the virus and to pay for a COVID-19 vaccine for all.
- **Wealth Inequality -** 78% of respondents think that coronavirus will lead to an increase or a major increase in wealth inequality in their country.
- **Working women severely hit during COVID-19 -** 56% respondents think that coronavirus will likely or very likely lead to an increase in gender inequality in their country. Globally, women are overrepresented in the sectors of the economy that are hardest hit by the pandemic.
- **Racial Inequality -** In Brazil, people of Afro-descent have been 40% more likely to die of COVID-19 than White people. In the US, Latino and Black people are more likely to die of COVID-19 than White people.
- **Lack of Plan to tackle Inequality -** 67% of respondents think that their government does not have a plan in place to mitigate the increase in inequality likely because of coronavirus.

WHAT NEEDS TO BE DONE?

The crisis has exposed our collective frailty and the inability of our deeply unequal economy to work for all. Yet it has also shown us the vital importance of government action to protect our health and livelihoods. ***Accordingly, Oxfam has identified five steps toward a better world.***

1. **Moving Beyond GDP to actual development that matters -** The government must set concrete, time-bound targets to reduce inequality. We must move beyond the focus from GDP to important social indicators of development such as health, education, job security and standard of living. Governments must move beyond a focus on Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and start to value what really matters. Fighting inequality must be at the heart of economic rescue and recovery efforts. This must include gender and racial equality. Countries like South Korea, Sierra Leone and New Zealand have committed to reducing inequality as a national priority, showing what can be done.
2. **Invest in free universal healthcare, education, and other public services** - Universal public services are the foundation of free and fair societies and have unparalleled power to reduce inequality, including gender and caste inequality. An immediate step could be delivering a free 'people's vaccine' to all citizens to tackle the pandemic.
3. **Greater Job Security with benefits -** Covid has shown us that guaranteed income security is essential and for this to happen citizens need not just living wages but also far greater job security, with labour rights, sick pay, paid parental leave and unemployment benefits if people lose their jobs. All these aspects of labour reforms must be taken immediately.
4. **Reintroduce wealth taxes** and ensure financial transaction taxes while putting an end to tax dodging. Progressive taxation is the cornerstone of any equitable recovery, as it will enable investment in a green, equitable future. Argentina showed the way by adopting a temporary solidarity wealth tax on the extremely wealthy that could generate over $3 billion.
5. **Invest in a green economy** that prevents further degradation of our planet and preserves it for our children. Climate breakdown is the biggest threat ever to human existence. It is already destroying the livelihoods and taking the lives of the poorest, economically excluded and historically oppressed communities. Women in these communities are among the most affected. To prevent this, we need to build a green economy that prevents further degradation of our planet and preserves it for our children. We need an end to all subsidies for fossil fuels, and an end to fossil fuel corporations and their rich shareholders making profits from government bailouts. The fight against inequality and the fight for climate justice are no different and is essentially the same fight.

CONCLUSION

The pandemic has shown us that massive action by governments is possible in the face of a crisis. Humanity has incredible talent, huge wealth and infinite imagination. We must put these assets to work to build a more equal human economy that benefits everyone, not just the privileged few.

INTER-MARRIAGES CAN REDUCE CASTE TENSIONS

#SOCIAL HARMONY #CASTE SYSTEM #COMMUNALISM

PRIMARY SOURCE THE HINDU | SECONDARY SOURCE Live Law.in

OBSERVATION OF THE SUPREME COURT

- Educated younger boys and girls are choosing their life partners, which, in turn, is a departure from the ***earlier norms of society*** where caste and community play a major role. Possibly, this is the way forward where caste and community tensions will reduce by such intermarriages.
- The Court quoted ***B.R. Ambedkar's Annihilation of Caste***, in which the 'Father of the Constitution' said, "*I am convinced that the real remedy is intermarriage. Fusion of blood can alone create the feeling of being kith and kin, and unless this feeling of kinship, of being kindred, becomes paramount, the separatist feeling—the feeling of being aliens—created by caste will not vanish".*
- ***Consent of the family or community or clan is not necessary once the two adult individuals agree to enter into a wedlock and that their consent has to be piously given primacy***.
- ***The younger generation that chooses to marry beyond the norms of caste and community was facing threats from elders.*** The courts have been coming to the aid of these youngsters, the court observed.

CONSTITUTIONAL AND LEGAL ARGUMENT PUT FORWARD BY THE COURT

Constitutional and legal argument put forward by the court

Article 21: Protection of life and personal liberty: No person shall be deprived of his life or personal liberty except according to procedure established by law.

Preamble: LIBERTY of thought, expression, belief, faith and worship

Individualistic *expression of choice are fundamental for the fructification of rights.*

Doctrine of progressive realization of rights

Maneka Gandhi vs. Union of India: right to life includes the right to live with human dignity.

Puttaswamy case: ***Right to privacy is a fundamental right,*** that is an intrinsic part of life and liberty under Article 21.

- Navtej singh Johar case (section 377)
- Joseph Shine Vs UoI 2018 (Adultery Judgement)
- Aadhar judgement
- Hadia judgement

- The Court made reference to Hadiya case and the Constitution Bench judgment in which ***privacy*** was declared a fundamental right guaranteed in the Constitution.
  - "***Intimacies of marriage lie within a core zone of privacy***," the Court reproduced the core of the Hadiya case judgment.
  - *"The choice of a partner whether within or outside marriage lies within the exclusive domain of each individual.*
- ***Faith of a person is intrinsic to his/her meaningful existence. To have the freedom of faith is essential to his/her autonomy; and it strengthens the core norms of the Constitution. Choosing a faith is the substratum of individuality and sans it, the right of choice becomes a shadow."***
- The court said the ***realisation of a right is more important than the conferment of the right***. "It is so because the individualistic faith and ***expression of choice are fundamental for the fructification of the right.*** Thus, we would like to call it indispensable preliminary condition,"
- The ***absolute right*** of an individual to choose a life partner is not in the least affected by matters of faith. *Choices of faith and belief as indeed choices in matters of marriage lie within an area where individual autonomy is supreme*. Neither the state nor the law can dictate a choice of partners or limit the free ability of every person to decide on these matters. ***They form the essence of personal liberty under the Constitution".***
- "Matters of belief and faith, including whether to believe are at the core of constitutional liberty. The Constitution exists for believers as well as for agnostics.
- Matters of dress and of food, of ideas and ideologies, of love and partnership are within the central aspects of ***identity.*** *Society has no role to play in determining our choice of partners.*
- ***The Constitution protects personal liberty from disapproving audiences***. "The social values and morals have their space but they are not above the constitutionally guaranteed freedom".
- "***The cohesion and stability of our society depend on our syncretic culture.*** The Constitution protects it. ***Courts are duty bound not to swerve from the path of upholding our pluralism and diversity as a nation***".
- The court termed this social rigidity towards intermarriage as a "***manifestation of the idea of patriarchal autocracy and possibly self-obsession with the feeling that a female is a chattel***".
- **Sans lawful sanction, the centripodal value of liberty should allow an individual to write his/her script.**
- The bench said that non--acceptance of Hadiya's choice would mean ***abdication by the Constitutional Court which is meant to be the protector of fundamental rights.***

THE CHANGING PATTERN IN INTIMATE RELATIONSHIPS IN INDIAN SOCIETY

- ***Inter-caste/inter-faith marriage***
- Same sex marriage
- Live-in-relationships
- Occupationally divided and distanced
- Age gap
- Singlehood/single parents
- High rate of divorce

Article 21

Choices of faith and belief as indeed choices in matters of marriage lie within an area where ***individual autonomy is supreme***. **(Shafin Jahan Vs Ashokan case)**

Liberty

Ability of every person to choose a partner ***form the essence of personal liberty under the Constitution.***

The Constitution protects personal liberty from disapproving audiences.**(Navtej Singh Johar Vs UoI case)**

Privacy

"***Intimacies of marriage lie within a core zone of privacy***"

Dignity

"***The choice of an individual is an inextricable part of dignity, for dignity cannot be thought of where there is erosion of choice.*" *(Aadhar Judgement)***

"***The social values and morals have their space but they are not above the constitutionally guaranteed freedom***". *Individual freedom prevails over purported group rights.* (Shabrimala Judgement).

Right of an individual to choose a life partner is an ***absolute right.***

VACCINE HESITANCY- CAUSES AND REMEDIES

#SOCIAL ISSUES

PRIMARY SOURCE THE HINDU

IN NEWS

The rapid advancements in the field of science and technology has led to the development of vaccines for a large number of diseases such as Diphtheria, Flu (Influenza), Hepatitis A, B, HPV, Measles, Rubella, Mumps, Rotavirus, Polio, Tetanus, Whooping cough etc. The development of the vaccines has led to saving of large number of human lives. WHO- prevented around 2-3 million deaths each year.

However, inspite of the availability of vaccines, the people as such as reluctant to take the vaccines. This form of aversion of the people towards the vaccines is known as "Vaccine Hesitancy". WHO has defined "Vaccine Hesitancy" as "the reluctance or refusal of the people to vaccinate despite the availability of vaccines".

WHO has listed as "vaccine hesitancy" as among the top 10 threats to global health this year.

Now, since WHO has declared the Vaccine Hesitancy as among the top 10 threats to global health, we must discuss as to what factors could influence the people to get vaccinated? What factors could dissuade the people from getting vaccinated? More importantly, what should be done in order to counter the growing problem of Vaccine Hesitancy?

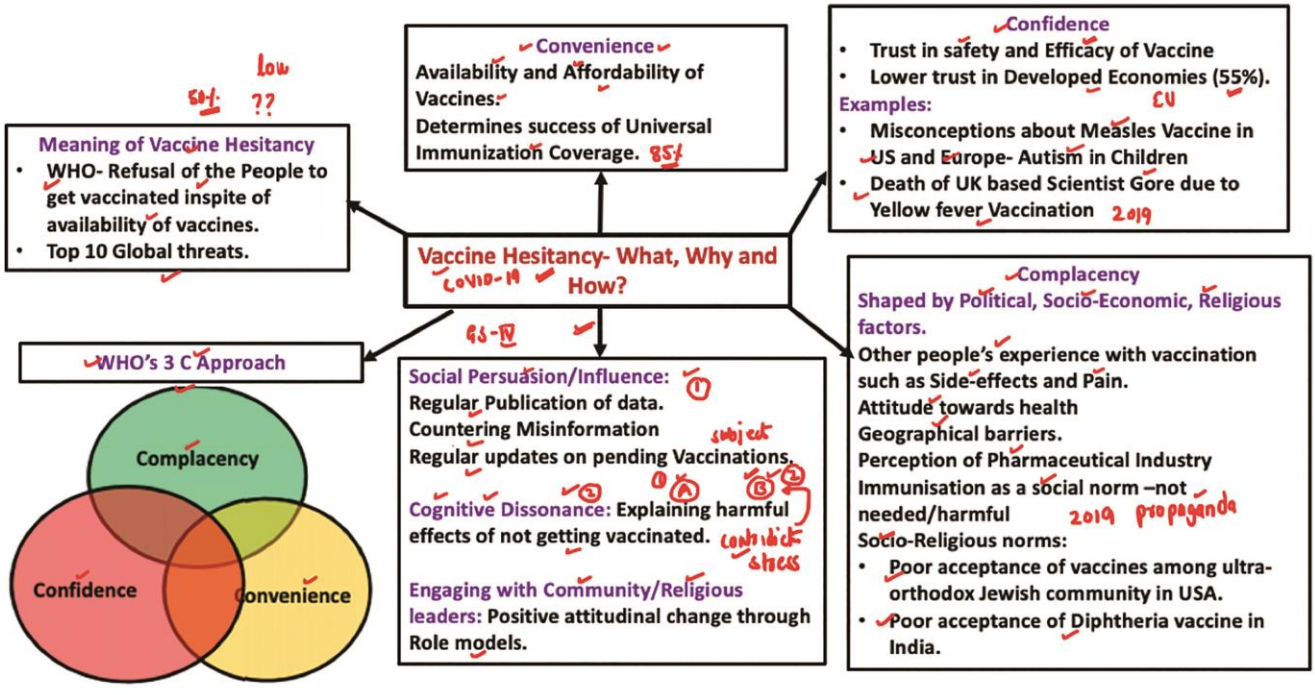
The question which arises is why are people reluctant to vaccinate themselves. Is it the poor understand of the efficacy of the vaccines? Is it the low literacy levels among the population? Or is it the socio-religious norms? To understand this, let us look at the vaccination model developed by WHO.

The vaccination model basically highlights as to what factors contribute to either higher or lower acceptance of vaccines among the population in a country.

- **Confidence** is defined as extent of trust in the effectiveness and safety of vaccines. If the people perceive that the vaccines are ineffective or may cause adverse impact on their health, then the people may not get themselves vaccinated due to the perceived risk.

For instance, the article highlights that 95% of the people in South Asia trusts vaccine. However, in case of Europe, the trust in the vaccines is hardly about 55% on an average.

- **Complacency:** Secondly, some of the people may also develop complacency related to vaccines wherein they may start perceiving that nothing would happen to them even if they do not take the vaccines. The complacency of the people towards the vaccines may get developed because of a number of factors.
- **Convenience:** Obviously, one of the most importance aspect of the acceptance of the vaccines is their availability and affordability. It is one of the basic prerequisite for expanding the immunisation coverage. When the vaccines are available across the country at affordable prices, automatically it would lead to expansion in the immunisation coverage within a country.


Meaning of Vaccine Hesitancy
WHO- Refusal of the People to get vaccinated inspite of availability of vaccines.
Top 10 Global threats.
Convenience
Availability and Affordability of Vaccines.
Determines success of Universal Immunization Coverage.
Confidence
Trust in safety and Efficacy of Vaccine
Lower trust in Developed Economies (55%).
Examples:
Misconceptions about Measles Vaccine in US and Europe- Autism in Children
Death of UK based Scientist Gore due to Yellow fever Vaccination
Vaccine Hesitancy- What, Why and How?
Complacency
Shaped by Political, Socio-Economic, Religious factors.
Other people's experience with vaccination such as Side-effects and Pain.
Attitude towards health
Geographical barriers.
Perception of Pharmaceutical Industry
Immunisation as a social norm –not needed/harmful
Socio-Religious norms:
Poor acceptance of vaccines among ultra-orthodox Jewish community in USA.
Poor acceptance of Diphtheria vaccine in India.
WHO's 3 C Approach
Complacency
Confidence
Convenience
Social Persuasion/Influence:
Regular Publication of data.
Countering Misinformation
Regular updates on pending Vaccinations.
Cognitive Dissonance: Explaining harmful effects of not getting vaccinated.
Engaging with Community/Religious leaders: Positive attitudinal change through Role models.

How to address the problem of Vaccine Hesitancy?

- **Integrating Behavioural Economics**: The Economic Survey 2018-19 has recommended for the integration of behavioural economics into our public policies. Through the behavioural economics, we should be able to influence or nudge the people to take decisions in their best interests. This behavioural economics can be used for improving the immunisation coverage in India.
- **Regular Publication of Data**: The Government should regularly publish the data as to how the improvement in the vaccination coverage has led to improvement in the health outcomes of the people. Such regular publication of data would dispel the wrong perceptions of the people about the vaccines and act as positive reinforcement for the people regarding the benefits of vaccination.
- **Counter the Misinformation**: As stated before, the vaccine hesitancy could develop among the people due to circulation of fake news as well as propaganda about the unsafe nature of the vaccines. The Government has to proactively counter such fake news and propaganda by demonstrating to the public about the safety and efficacy of the vaccines.
- **Regular updates on pending vaccination**: The Government should send regular updates on the mobile phones of the people related to the pending vaccination of their children. Such constant reminders to the people would improve the vaccination coverage.

- **Providing Incentives**: Recently, the Nobel Prize in the field of Economics has been awarded to Abhijeet Banerjee and his companions. These Nobel laureates have demonstrated as to how the evidence based policy making can improve the development outcomes. In particular, through an experiment which they carried out in the state of Rajasthan, the Nobel Laureates have demonstrated that the immunisation coverage can be improved if the people are provided with certain incentives. For instance, they have showed that if the poor families are provided with the food grains, then they would be incentivised to get their children vaccinated.
- **Training the Health Workers**: The health workers in India such as the ASHA workers can play an instrumental role in dispelling the wrong perceptions related to vaccines. These ASHA workers have to be suitably trained to communicate to the communities on benefits of the vaccination.
- **Engaging with the religious leaders**: As discussed before, the socio-religious outlook can sometime contribute to vaccine hesitancy. Hence, the government should engage with the religious leaders who wield considerable influence over the communities. These religious leaders have to be sensitised about the importance of vaccines and they should be asked to communicate the benefits of the vaccines to their community members.

WASH

#HEALTH & DISEASES #SOCIAL EMPOWERMENT

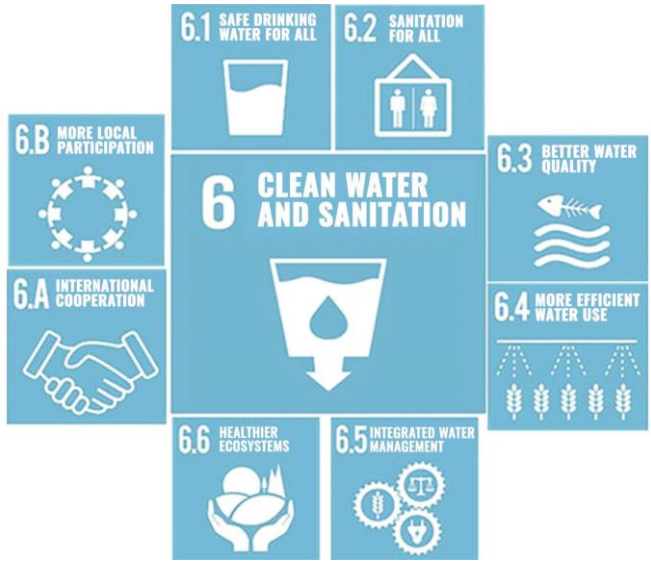
PRIMARY SOURCE THE HINDU SECONDARY SOURCE pib

WASH refers to water, sanitation, and hygiene. Ensuring availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation to all is one of the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) of the World Health Organisation (WHO). In this context, a study published recently in BMJ Global Health highlights the following:

- The study estimates that improving WASH across the pubic healthcare facilities in India and maintaining this for a year would cost $354 million in capital costs and $289 million in recurrent expenses.
- The study further finds that the costliest interventions were providing **clean water**, linen reprocessing and sanitation while the least expensive were **hand hygiene**, medical device reprocessing and environmental surface cleaning.
- The study also mentions about **2019 Joint Global Baseline Report** by **WHO and UNICEF, according to which** Globally, one in four healthcare facilities lacked basic water servicing and one in five had no sanitation service and 42% had no hygiene facilities at point of care.

WASH

In 2015, for the first time, WHO and UNICEF assessed the status of WASH in health care facilities in low- and middle-income countries. The WHO/UNICEF JMP report, **WASH in Health Care Facilities**, is the first comprehensive global assessment of water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) in health care facilities.


6.1 SAFE DRINKING WATER FOR ALL
6.2 SANITATION FOR ALL
6.B MORE LOCAL PARTICIPATION
6 CLEAN WATER AND SANITATION
6.3 BETTER WATER QUALITY
6.A INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION
6.4 MORE EFFICIENT WATER USE
6.6 HEALTHIER ECOSYSTEMS
6.5 INTEGRATED WATER MANAGEMENT

- It outlines that, WASH services in many facilities across the world are missing or substandard.
- It finds that 1 in 8 health care facilities has no water service and 1 in 5 has no sanitation service – impacting close to 900 million and more than 1.5 billion people, respectively.
- One in every six healthcare facilities was estimated to have no hygiene service (meaning it lacked hand hygiene facilities at points of care, as well as soap and

water at toilets), while data on waste management and environmental cleaning was inadequate across the board.

- In 2018, the United Nations (UN) issued a **Global Call to Action to elevate the importance of and prioritize action on WASH in all health care facilities**, including primary, secondary and tertiary facilities in both the public and private sectors. The call recognises the important role WASH plays in preventing infections, saving lives, and improving quality of care.
- Together, WHO & UNICEF, are responsible for monitoring the **2030 Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) targets 6.1 and 6.2** and supporting global monitoring of other WASH-related SDG targets and indicators.
- Achievement of numerous SDGs, including **Goal 3 on health** and **Goal 13 on climate change**, cannot be met without meaningful progress on Goal 6.

IMPORTANCE OF WASH - WATER, SANITATION, AND HYGIENE

- There is clear evidence that shows that hygienic behaviour reduces the risk of infection and associated death. Eg: It is estimated that washing hands with soap and water could reduce diarrheal disease-associated deaths by up to 50%
- When a healthcare facility lacks adequate WASH services, **infection prevention and control are severely compromised**. This has the potential to make patients and health workers sick from avoidable infections.
- As a result (and in addition), efforts **to improve maternal, neonatal and child health are undermined. 2019 Report by WHO & UNICEF** highlights about the need to reduce healthcare-associated infections among mother and neonates across the Indian healthcare system.
- Lack of WASH facilities also results in unnecessary use of antibiotics, thereby **spreading antimicrobial resistance**. World Health Organization (WHO) has recently identified antimicrobial resistance as one of the three most important problems facing human health.
- Safe WASH is not only a prerequisite to health, but **contributes to livelihoods, school attendance and dignity** and helps to create resilient communities living in healthy environments.
- A WHO document on WASH in healthcare facilities points out that 8,27,000 people in Low- and Middle-income Countries die as a result of inadequate water, sanitation and hygiene each year. Also, death of 2,97,000 children under five years can be prevented each year if better WASH could be provided.
- 2012 WHO report had calculated that for every dollar invested in sanitation, there was $5.50 to be gained in lower health costs, more productivity and fewer premature deaths.
- Safe and sufficient WASH plays a key role in **preventing numerous Neglected Tropical Diseases**.
- WASH is an essential element of quality UHC, is recognized by the UN as a **fundamental human right**, and is cost-effective.
- Rapid and **recent changes in the global environment,** including the impacts of climate change and unprecedented growth of urban populations, have led to new WASH-related issues and challenges.
- Notably, improving WASH services was deemed essential to enhancing the quality of primary healthcare services, **increasing equity** and **bridging the rural-urban divide.**

WHO STRATEGIC PLAN FOR WASH: 2018-2025

WHO is uniquely positioned to achieve impact through the following strategic approaches, building on its existing work and established credibility and expertise.

1. **Develop, update and disseminate** health-based guidance documents and best practice guides, norms and standards that support standard-setting and regulations at national level.
2. **Empower countries** through multi-sectoral technical cooperation, advice and capacity building to governments, practitioners and partners.
3. **Monitor research and report reliable and credible WASH data** to inform policies and programmes.

4. Coordinate with **multi-sectoral partners**, lead or engage with global and regional platforms, and advocate for WASH.
5. Promote **integration of WASH with other health programmes** for example disease programmes for cholera and NTDs.
6. **Respond to emerging issues such as climate change** and WASH, including the impact of water scarcity on public health, and AMR.

PRIORITY INTERVENTION AREAS 2018–2025

WHO will organize WASH activities in the following priority areas where it has existing activities and partnerships or an emerging critical role:

- **Drinking-water quality** and safety to provide authoritative and objective information on human health risks associated with water quality contaminants in national contexts.
- **Improving safety of sanitation and wastewater management,** maximising health benefits of sanitation interventions.
- **WASH in health care facilities** (including health care waste management) to support development of country standards and policies and monitoring.
- **Global Analysis and Assessment of Sanitation and Drinking-Water (GLAAS) to provide policy and decision-makers** with a comprehensive global analysis of investments and the enabling environment for WASH.
- **Joint Monitoring Programme (JMP) to support national, regional and global monitoring** and reporting of progress towards universal access to safely managed drinking-water, sanitation and hygiene.
- **Integration of WASH with health and other programmes** such as AMR, cholera, climate change, emergencies, IPC, NTDs, nutrition, UHC, water security to increase synergies and impacts.

WAY FORWARD

The intersection between WASH, infection prevention and control and antimicrobial resistance is unique in that it offers policy makers an opportunity to address multiple overlapping problems through interventions on WASH in healthcare facilities.

COVID-19 AND ITS IMPACT ON LEARNING

#SOCIAL EQUALITY #SOCIAL JUSTICE

PRIMARY SOURCE THE HINDU SECONDARY SOURCE The Indian EXPRESS

- Around 300 million children across all age groups are reported to be out of school in India now due to lockdown
- The education sector faces **issues**
  - challenges of delivery, especially of pedagogical processes,
  - classroom assessment frameworks, (As many must have missed content offered on the various e-mail platforms)
  - students' support and teacher-student engagement.
  - poor access to digital data
- The children were burdened with household/farm work; girl students in particular were apprehensive of being given away in marriage.
- The lockdown happened during the last quarter of the academic year which led to the postponement of examinations and the curtailment of the prescribed syllabi.
- Digital learning has failed to take into account existing divides — spatial, digital, gender and class. **A recent UNICEF report points out that the massive school closures exposed the uneven distribution of technology that is needed to facilitate remote learning.**
- Many States lacked adequate digital infrastructure and even teachers were poorly equipped to teach.

Impact

1. The chances for an **education-enabled** social and economic **mobility** appear to be grim in the country.(individual as well as community level)

2. Following closure of schools, boys became inattentive to studies while girls, with lesser opportunities, were more involved in household chores. **(more dropouts led to poverty which is a mother of many evils for eg- insurgency, terrorism etc). Also can be related to demographic dividend utility) as failure to utilize demo graphic dividend led to humongous crisis- can be related to economy.**
3. With their educational routine having been disrupted, children, in many cases, have also forgotten what they learnt earlier. Again, the decision to postpone the board examinations and to allow automatic promotion to the higher classes is **bound to affect the quality**.
4. Without going school by sitting in home, they are losing the benefit of school environment conditioning**.(this can be connected to preamble values like Secularism, Equality, Fraternity etc)**
5. **The abilities of the families** and communities concerned to support the educational journeys of the children have been **found to be affected**. *(A survey promoted by the **Centre for Budget and Policy Studies, 2020** -3,176 households of Assam, Bihar, Uttar Pradesh, Telangana and Delhi, found that in families which faced cash and food shortages, only 50% of the boys and girls were confident of returning to school)*
6. The long closure of schools has also meant the **disruption of a range of activities such as the mid-day meal scheme, the school health programme and pre-metric scholarships to girl children.** (played key role in enrolment as well as regular attendance)
7. It will impact the future of our nation and the reason for enacting **86Th Amendment Act(Connected to Polity)**

Below are possible (distinct advantages) of digital education for students and teachers:

1. **Easy access to information** that is customized and suited to the learning needs of students.
2. Increased mobility and flexibility that gives **learners the opportunity to choose their time and place of learning.**
3. Use of technology tools helps to make the **learning process more interactive and collaborative** where all learners converge to create a learning experience that transcends geographical boundaries.
4. **Increased collaboration among teachers and educators in real-time results in 'Connected Classrooms'** that make way for better coordination and sharing of insights.
5. **A personalized learning experience** made possible by use of technology**, helps students to learn at a pace that is best suited to their needs**.
6. Interactive digital tools are way more impactful than printed textbooks. As a result, learners are more actively involved, **leading to higher retention and recall of learning material.**
7. **Digital learning creates 'smarter' students** with greater accountability for their learning process **stemming from immediate feedback and performance analytics, customized learning paths,** peer-benchmarking opportunities and more.
8. **Direct and favourable impact on the environment, owing to the need for less paper,** thereby helping to cut costs and maximize resources.

INITIATIVE TAKEN BY GOVERNMENT

1. Push to the digital distance learning method. The focus was on the use of text/video/audio content through SMS, WhatsApp, radio and TV programmes to reach out to students and engage them.
2. The Union Ministry of Human Resource Development in 2020 started sharing **free e-learning platforms.** These included:

a) **Diksha portal** which has e-learning content aligned to the curriculum,

b) **e-Pathshala,** an app by the National Council of Educational Research and Training for Classes 1 to 12 in multiple languages.

c) **SWAYAM** hosts 1,900 complete courses including teaching videos, computer weekly assignments, examinations and credit transfers, aimed both at school (Classes 1 to 12) and higher education.

d) **SWAYAM Prabha** is a group of 32 direct to home channels devoted to the telecasting of educational programmes. While this looks fairly impressive, there are many pitfalls.

WHAT SHOULD BE DONE

1. When schools finally reopen in the country, **the number** of children returning to class has to be closely **scrutinised.**
2. More than just the numbers, the authorities have to **realistically assess the level of understanding of students** who have returned to schools after 'digital learning' at home. (As majority of children, especially girl students, have missed out much on the various e-mail platforms offered.)
3. **Collaboration with NGO** *(As schools run by the **non-governmental organisation sector did fairly well during the interregnum.** These **schools did not go online. Instead, teachers visited individual students at home. They also taught children in small groups.)***
4. Digital learning have only exposed the wide digital divide between the rich and the poor and the urban and rural areas. **Education planning has to be context specific, gender responsive and inclusive.** For this measures should include access to online education, removal of barriers in pre-metric scholarships and ensuring the provision of mid-day meals, iron and folic acid tablets and provision of personal hygiene products to girl students even when schools are closed.
5. Once schools reopen finally, **the authorities should establish the re-enrolment of children as mandated by the National Education Policy 2020**.
6. **Mass outreach programmes** should be developed with civil society **to encourage re-enrolment.**
7. **Remedial tuitions** and **counselling are advisable, along with scholarships, targeted cash transfers and other entitlements to retain the poorest at school.** (consider making secondary education for girls free.)
8. The governments to keep **the budgetary share of education to 6% of GDP, as emphasised by the President of India.**

INTENSIFIED MISSION INDRADHANUSH 3.0 (UMI 3.0)

#HEALTH & DISEASES #SOCIAL EMPOWERMENT

PRIMARY SOURCE THE HINDU SECONDARY SOURCE pib

IN NEWS

***The Ministry of Health and Family Welfare has launched Intensified Mission Indradhanush 3.0 to cover children and pregnant women who missed routine immunisation during the COVID-19 pandemic,** through a mission mode intervention. Beneficiaries from migration areas and remote areas would be targeted as they may have missed their vaccine doses during the pandemic.*

The first phase has been rolled out from February 22 for 15 days. More than 29,000 children and 5,000 pregnant women were covered on the first day.

IMI 3.0 will build on the gains of previous phases of the campaign and make lasting gains towards Universal Immunization.

The present eighth campaign will target achieving 90% Full Immunization Coverage (FIC) in all districts of the country and sustain the coverage through immunization system strengthening and foster India's march towards the Sustainable Development Goals.

MISSION INDRADHANUSH

- Launched in 2014 to provide affordable and accessible healthcare to all citizens of the country.
- The aim is to fully immunize more than 89 lakh children who are either unvaccinated or partially vaccinated under UIP.
- It targets children under 2 years of age and pregnant women for immunization.

- It provides **vaccination against 12 Vaccine-Preventable Diseases (VPD)** i.e. **diphtheria, Whooping cough, tetanus, polio, tuberculosis, hepatitis B, meningitis and pneumonia, Hemophilus influenza type B infections, Japanese encephalitis (JE), rotavirus vaccine, pneumococcal conjugate vaccine (PCV) and measles-rubella (MR).**
  - Vaccination against Japanese Encephalitis and Haemophilus influenzae type B is being provided in selected districts of the country.
- It is a nationwide initiative with a special focus on 201 high focus districts. These districts accounted for nearly 50% of the total partially vaccinated or unvaccinated children in the country.
- The rate of increase in full immunization coverage increased to 6.7% per year through the first two phases of 'Mission Indradhanush'.

INTENSIFIED MISSION INDRADHANUSH (IMI)

- It was launched by the Government of India in **2017** to reach each and every child under two years of age and all those pregnant women who have been left uncovered under the routine immunisation programme.
- Under IMI, **greater focus has been given on urban areas** which was one of the gaps of Mission Indradhanush.
- **The target under IMI was to increase the full immunization coverage to 90% by December 2018.** However, only 16 districts in the country have achieved 90% coverage so far.
- The Intensified Mission Indradhanush 2.0 will target the districts which have immunisation coverage of 70% or below.

THE IMPORTANCE OF VACCINES IN INDIA

- Around 27 million children are born every year in India. Evidence shows that unimmunised and partially-immunised children are most vulnerable to diseases and disability, and are at three to six times higher risk of death than fully immunised children.
- A large percentage of under-five mortality in India can be averted through vaccination.
- India has the largest burden of under-five mortality. Nearly 39 children under the age of five years die for every 1,000 live births each year — pneumonia and diarrhoea are the leading killers.
- Approximately 0.1 million children die due to rotavirus-induced diarrhoea alone, which is around 50% of all deaths attributed to diarrhoea.
- To achieve herd immunity a high immunization coverage needs to be achieved and maintained in the community. This means that every cohort of children born needs to have a sufficiently high number of children immunized to offer protection to those who missed immunization, or to those who are still susceptible to the disease even after immunization.
- Any fall in coverage leads to disease outbreaks as seen periodically in case of measles or the recent outbreak of diphtheria in many states.

UN COMMITTEE FOR WORLD FOOD SECURITY (CFS) GUIDELINES

#FOOD SECURITY #NUTRITION & HUNGER #SOCIAL JUSTICE

PRIMARY SOURCE THE HINDU

IN NEWS

The guidelines have been developed to support countries in their efforts to eradicate all forms of hunger and malnutrition (SDG 2) by utilizing a comprehensive food systems approach. Recommendations aim at reducing policy fragmentation between relevant sectors and addressing economic, social, and environmental sustainability.

GUIDELINES ARE STRUCTURED AROUND SEVEN FOCUS AREAS

- Transparent, democratic and accountable governance;
- Sustainable food supply chains to achieve healthy diets;
- Equal and equitable access to healthy diets through sustainable food systems;
- Food safety across sustainable food systems;
- People-centred nutrition knowledge, education and information;

- Gender equality and women's empowerment across food systems;
- Resilient food systems in humanitarian contexts.

As per FAO, 130 million more being pushed into hunger because of the COVID-19 pandemic and more than 3 billion people cannot afford a healthy diet. Guidelines also complement the work and mandate of other international bodies, like UN Decade of Action on Nutrition (2016-2025).

CFS is an international and intergovernmental platform for stakeholders to work towards ensuring food security and nutrition for all. It is hosted and co-funded by the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO).

SAME-SEX MARRIAGES

#GAY RIGHTS #SOCIAL JUSTICE

PRIMARY SOURCE THE HINDU SECONDARY SOURCE Live Law.in

IN NEWS

The Centre opposed any changes to the existing laws on marriage to recognise same-sex marriages. The petitions filed in Delhi High Court contended that ***marriages between same sex couples are not possible despite the Supreme Court decriminalising consensual homosexual acts.***

Earlier, petitioners sought a declaration ***to recognise same sex marriages under the Hindu Marriage Act (HMA) and Special Marriage Act (SMA). The Section 377 of the Indian Penal Code*** *makes sex or marriage with persons of the same gender punishable by law. However,* ***on September 6, 2018****, the* ***Supreme Court of India decriminalised Section 377*** *making gay sex legal. (****Navtej Singh Johar case****)*

THE POSITION OF THE CENTRE ON SAME-SEX MARRIAGES

1. Such interference would cause "a complete havoc with the delicate balance of personal laws in the country".
2. Living together as partners and having sexual relationship by same-sex individuals is **not comparable with the Indian family unit concept** of a husband, a wife and children, which necessarily presuppose a biological man as a 'husband', a biological woman as a 'wife' and the children born out of their union.
3. "Registration of marriage of same-sex persons also results in violation of existing personal as well as codified law provisions — such as 'degrees of prohibited relationship'; 'conditions of marriage'; 'ceremonial and ritual requirements' under the personal laws governing the individuals".
4. Any other interpretation except treating 'husband' as a biological man and 'wife' as a biological woman will make all statutory provisions unworkable.
5. The 2018 judgment of the Supreme Court decriminalising homosexual sex was "neither intended to, nor did it in fact, legitimise the human conduct in question".
6. Despite the decriminalisation of Section 377 of the Indian Penal Code (IPC), the petitioners cannot claim a fundamental right for same-sex marriage being recognised under the laws of the country".

Various Supreme Court judgments have laid down the foundation for same-sex marriage

- **Constitution Bench judgment** - declared the right to privacy as a fundamental right protected under the Indian Constitution. In declaring that this right stems from the fundamental right to life and liberty.
- ***Navtej Johar judgement***: 'family, marriage, procreation and sexual orientation are all integral to the dignity of the individual. Above all, the privacy of the individual recognizes an inviolable right to determine how freedom shall be exercised'.
- **Hadia Judgement** - "***Intimacies of marriage lie within a core zone of privacy***. *"The choice of a partner whether within or outside marriage lies within the exclusive domain of each individual.*
- Recent Supreme Court Judgement on inter-caste and inter-faith marriage –
  - Matters of dress and of food, of ideas and ideologies, of love and partnership are within the central aspects of ***identity.*** *Society has no role to play in determining our choice of partners.*
  - ***The Constitution protects personal liberty from disapproving audiences***. "The social values and morals have their space but they are not above the constitutionally guaranteed freedom".
- **Shabrimala judgement*:*** *Individual freedom prevails over purported group rights.*

SAME SEX MARRIAGE AND INDIAN SOCIETY

- Marriage lies at the intersection of society and the law. Societal traditions are crystallized into the rules relating to marriage by law. The law is however a dynamic concept. Inevitably the nature of marriage would change if there is a change in society. Consequently, the law would have to be amended to keep pace with this societal change. However, one cannot ignore that the supreme source of the law is the Constitution, and hence the egalitarian and liberating spirit of the Constitution must necessarily interact with social rules. Even if society does not change, the principles of the Constitution must nevertheless apply.
- A massive makeover in our social and legal institutions is needed to cope up with emerging challenges to safeguard both individual liberty and social good.

PRACTICE QUESTIONS

Q1. Which Article of the Constitution of India safeguards one's right to marry the person of one's choice?

(a) Article 19 (b) Article 21
(c) Article 25 (d) Article 29

Q2. In the context of polity, which one of the following would you accept as the most appropriate definition of liberty?

(a) Protection against the tyranny of political rulers.
(b) Absence of restraint.
(c) Opportunity to do whatever one likes.
(d) Opportunity to develop oneself fully.

Q3. The COVID-19 performance index has been released by which of the following organisations?

a) World Economic Forum
b) World Health Organisation
c) World Bank
d) None of the above

Q4. Global Health Security Index is released by which of the following organisations?

a) OECD
b) Johns Hopkins Centre for Health Security
c) Economist Intelligence Unit
d) Both (b) and (c)

Q5. Consider the following statements regarding Mission Indradhanush:

1. It targets full immunization of children under 2 years and pregnant women.
2. Currently mission covers 10 vaccine preventable diseases.

Select the correct answer using the codes given below:

a) 1 only b) 2 only
c) Both 1 and 2 d) Neither 1 nor 2

DESCRIPTIVE QUESTIONS

Q1. Explain hidden hunger and aspect of affordability of healthy diet for vulnerable sections - when food intake lacks sufficient nutrition - Vitamins, Minerals, Proteins etc. necessary for complete diet. Suggest measures to improve nutrition in food delivered through institutional mechanism such as aanganwadis. Suggest important nutritious food which can be added in the diet to remove hidden hunger.

Q2. Do you think features of Indian society have been changing over the period of time? Substantiate with examples.

***Answers**: 1-b, 2-d, 3-d, 4-d, 5-a*

SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY

GS PAPER (PRELIMS) & GS PAPER III (MAIN)

GEOSPATIAL DATA

#TECHNOLOGY

PRIMARY SOURCE THE HINDU SECONDARY SOURCE DNA

IN NEWS

The Ministry of Science and Technology has released new guidelines for the Geo-spatial sector in India, which deregulates existing protocol and liberalises the sector to a more competitive field. The sector will be deregulated and aspects such as prior approvals for surveying, mapping and building applications based on that have been done away with.

For Indian entities, there will be complete deregulation with no prior approvals, security clearances and licences for the acquisition and production of geospatial data and geospatial data services, including maps.

- **What is Geospatial Data?** Geospatial data (also known as "spatial data") is used to describe data that represents features or objects on the Earth's surface. Whether it's man-made or natural, if it has to do with a specific location on the globe, then it's geospatial.
- There are many ways geospatial data can be used and represented. Most commonly, it's used within a GIS (Geographic Information System) to understand spatial relationships and to create maps describing these relationships. A GIS can also help you regulate, customize, and analyse geospatial data.

Use of Geospatial Data in other industries
Business Development
Geographic information systems help businesses gain true customer insight. By using GIS for business geography, professionals can uncover data like brand preferences and buying habits.
Public Economic Development
Departments for aggregation of demographic data.
Fiber Network Management
Fiber Network Management for interdepartmental network assets.
Public Safety Operations
Public safety operations include virus outbrakes (e.g Coronavirus).
GIS
Politics
Public Administration for election data, property records, and zoning/management.
Governmental Land Management (Lands & Survey Department)
Parks and Recreation departments and their functions in asset inventory, land conservation, land management.
Space, Air, Water
Cargo Freights
Commercial Flights
Space Explorations
Satellite launches and maintenance.
Public Works & Utilities
Public Works and Utilities, tracking water and stormwater drainage, electrical assets, engineering projects.
Geospatial Data/ Industry/ Other/

- Some examples of geospatial data include:
  - **Vectors and Attributes**: Points, lines, polygons, and other descriptive information about any location can be known via vectors and attributes.

- **Point Clouds**: Collected by LiDAR systems, they can be used to create 3D models of areas and localities.
- **Raster and Satellite Imagery**: This helps in getting a bird's eye view of what the Earth looks like via high-resolution imagery.

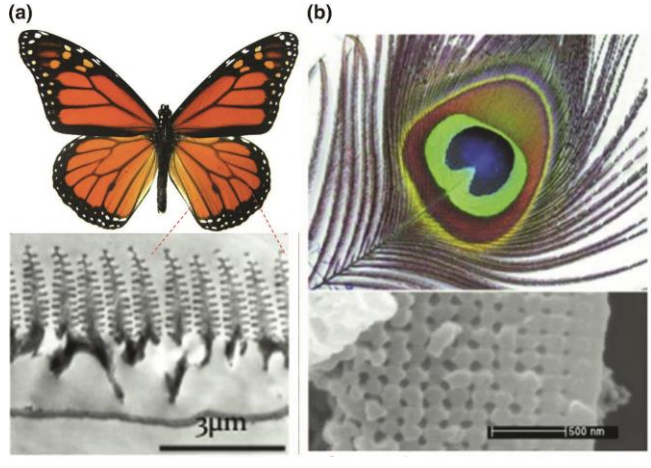
- **Mapping data useful for private companies**
- Geospatial data is foundational and will play a vital role in every manner of planning, governance, services, infrastructure, and applications.
- This mapping data will be helpful for private companies who are seeking maps and data that suit their specific purposes. For example, local delivery of products and services requires highly specific details of a locality within a town. This, in turn, could lay the groundwork for future smart city projects.
- **Advantage of privatization of geospatial data in India:** This data will help drive efficiencies in the agriculture sector. While facilitating the rise of new-age industries, increased participation of the private sector will increase the growth of new technologies, platforms, and applications of geospatial data which will directly contribute to the country's progress.

NANOPHOTONICS

#TECHNOLOGY

PRIMARY SOURCE | THE HINDU

- The term "nanophotonics" is used to encompass the **scientific study of the interaction of matter and light at the nanometer scale.**
- It is possible to design nanometer scale devices to slow down, enhance, produce, or manipulate light by understanding how light behaves as it travels through, or otherwise interacts with, materials at the nanometer scale.
- Two applications where nanophotonics have had an impact on society are devices used in **optical switching for telecommunications** and **Organic Light Emitting Diodes (OLEDs)** used in display technology and lighting.
- OLEDs are light emitting diodes that have organic materials as their light emitting layer. The organic materials are generally classified into two categories: small molecule (SMOLED) and polymeric (PLED). In both types, different layers are placed in between a cathode and an anode; when electricity passes through, light is produced. These devices have already been introduced into the commercial market in the form of simple displays on consumer products (Philips electric razor), as well as in both cameras (Kodak) and television sets (Sony).
- As the ability to effectively design and manufacture devices at the nanometer scale increases, the applications for nanophotonics grow. There are many industries that benefit from this science and its continued advancement including computer, telecommunication, biotechnology, and sensing.
- One way to picture the interaction of light and matter in a nanophotonic material is to consider a photonic crystal. A photonic crystal is a material that has a nanostructure which affects the **motion of electromagnetic energy.**
- **Nanophotonics in nature**



- Photonic crystals can be used in different applications including telecommunications, security dyes and paints. One very colourful example is **colour changing paints**. A small amount of photonic crystals is added to a base paint resulting in a coating that, depending on the type of light shining on it as well as the viewing angle, appears to change colours. As light travels through the crystal it interacts with the matrix of the material.
- The way that light interacts with the material can be manipulated by changing the surroundings in which

the crystal resides. For example, an electric field can be applied to the material to change the speed at which light travels through it. Manipulation of photonic materials can result in changes in frequency/wavelength as well as intensity.

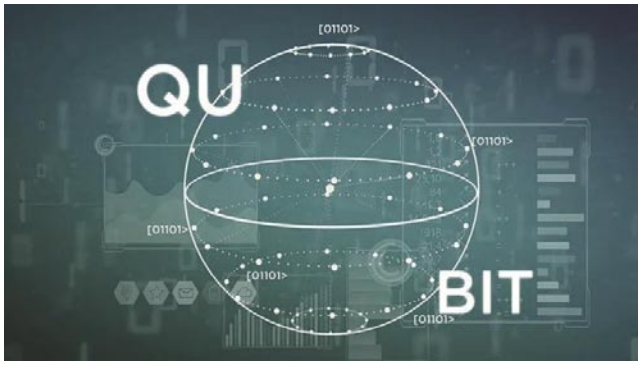
QUANTUM COMPUTERS

#TECHNOLOGY

PRIMARY SOURCE THE HINDU

WHAT ARE QUANTUM COMPUTERS?

- Quantum computers work differently from the classical computers. By exploiting the principles of quantum mechanics, they can easily tackle computational problems that may be tough for the classical computer as the size of the numbers and number of inputs involved grows bigger.
- Quantum computers do not look like desktops or laptops that we associate the word 'computer' with. Instead (and there are only a handful of them) they resemble the air-conditioned server rooms of many offices or the stacks of central processing units from desktops of yore that are connected by ungainly tangled wires and heaped in freezing rooms.
- **Conventional computers process information in 'bits' or 1s and 0s**, following classical physics under which our computers can process a '1' or a '0' at a time. The world's most powerful super computer today can juggle 148,000 trillion operations in a second and requires about 9000 IBM CPUs connected in a particular combination to achieve this feat.
- **Quantum computers compute in 'qubits'** (or quantum bits). They **exploit the properties of quantum mechanics**, the science that governs how matter behaves on the atomic scale. **In this scheme of things, processors can be a 1 and a 0 simultaneously**, a state called **quantum superposition**. While this accelerates the speed of computation, a machine with less than a 100 qubits can solve problems with a lot of data that are even theoretically beyond the capabilities of the most powerful supercomputers. Because of quantum superposition, a quantum computer — if it works to plan — can mimic several classical computers working in parallel.
- The ideas governing quantum computers have been around since the 1990s but actual machines have been around since 2011, most notably built by Canadian company D-Wave Systems.



BENEFITS

- The speed and capability of classical supercomputers are limited by energy requirements. Along with these they also need more physical space. That translates into reduced processors and reduced energy.
- A quantum computer can solve problem rapidly because it can attack complex problems that are beyond the scope of a classical computer. The basic **advantage is speed** as it is able to **simulate several classical computers working in parallel**. Several encryption systems used in banking and security applications are premised on computers being unable to handle mathematical problems that are computationally demanding beyond a limit. Quantum computers, in theory, can surpass those limits.

EDGE COMPUTING

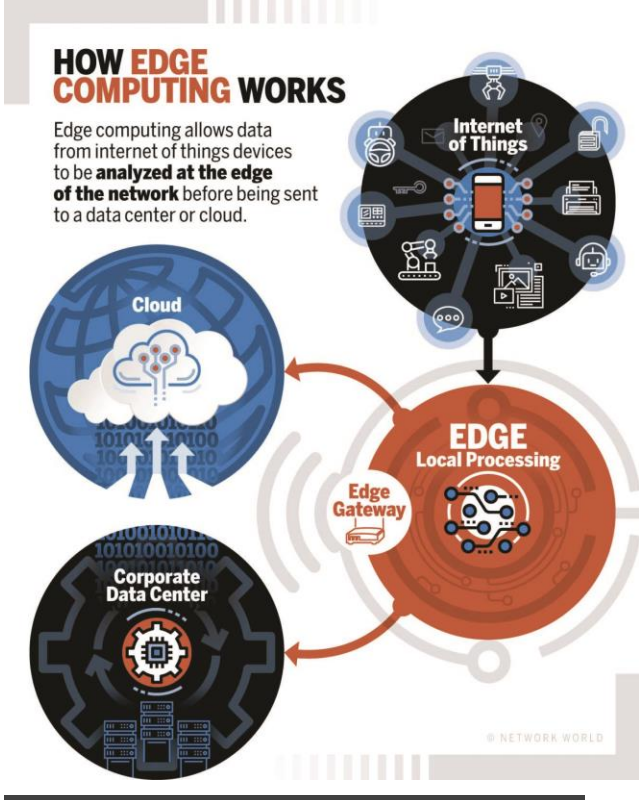
#TECHNOLOGY

PRIMARY SOURCE THE HINDU

- Such computing enables data to be analysed, processed, and transferred at the edge of a network – where things and people produce or consume that information..
- At its basic level, edge computing brings **computation and data storage closer to the devices** where it's being gathered, rather than relying

on a central location that can be thousands of miles away. This is done so that data, especially real-time data, does not suffer latency issues that can affect an application's performance. In addition, companies can save money by having the processing done locally, reducing the amount of data that needs to be processed in a centralized or cloud-based location.

- Edge computing was developed due to the exponential growth of IoT devices, which connect to the internet for either receiving information from the cloud or delivering data back to the cloud. And many IoT devices generate enormous amounts of data during the course of their operations.


HOW EDGE COMPUTING WORKS
Edge computing allows data from internet of things devices to be analyzed at the edge of the network before being sent to a data center or cloud.
Internet of Things
Cloud
EDGE
Local Processing
Edge Gateway
Corporate Data Center
© NETWORK WORLD

HOW IS EDGE COMPUTING DIFFERENT FROM CLOUD COMPUTING?

- The basic difference between edge computing and cloud computing lies in where the data processing takes place.
- The existing Internet of Things (IoT) systems perform all of their computations in the cloud using data centres.
- Edge computing, on the other hand, essentially manages the massive amounts of data generated by IoT devices by storing and processing data locally.

ANTI-BIOTIC RESISTANCE

#HEALTH

PRIMARY SOURCE THE HINDU

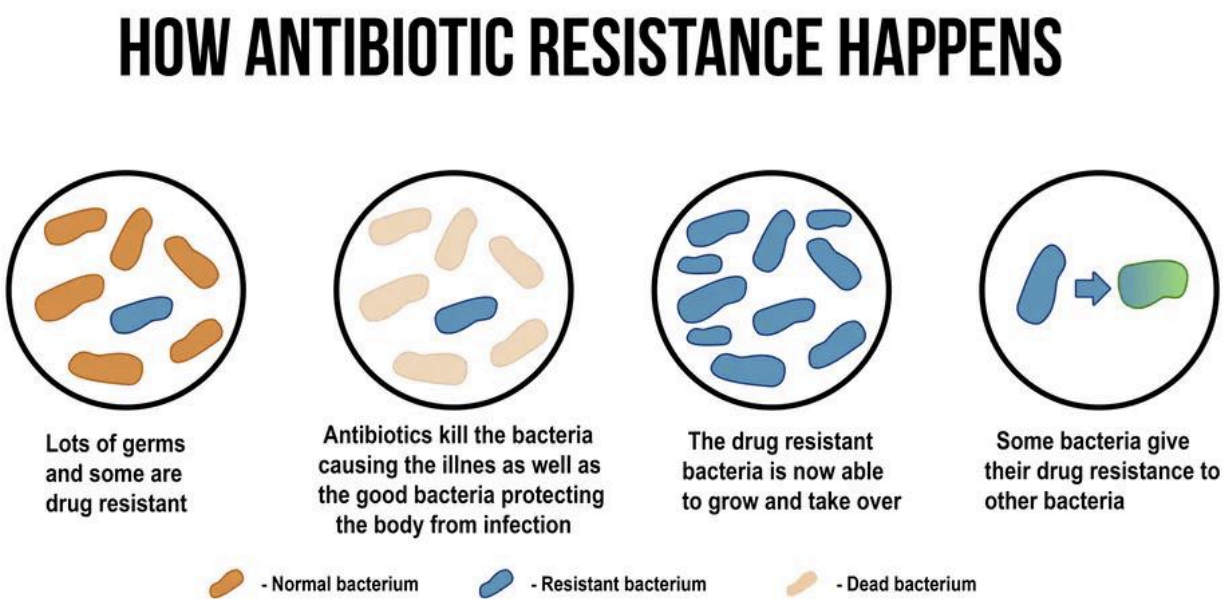
ABOUT ANTIBIOTIC RESISTANCE

- Bacteria develop drug resistance both when they are within the body and outside.
- The **intake of drugs stopped mid-way** could lead to the development of drug resistance.
- **Low doses of such drugs available intermittently in the environment** can also cause drug resistance to evolve in the bacteria.
- According to studies, the process of the development of drug resistance is rapid. E.Coli can evolve resistance to rifampicin within a few generations of drug exposure.
- When E.Coli is exposed to low concentration of anti-biotics it form **biofilm.** These are dangerous as biofilms are themselves a major challenge for hospitals.
- They found that biofilm formation was mediated by the activation of particular gene called the **fim operon promoter**. Activation of the gene allowed the expression of a type of fimbriae — thread-like structures that help a bacterium attach itself to another bacterium. These are important in the formation of biofilms.

ANTI-BIOTIC RESISTANCE IN INDIA

- The misuse and overuse of antibiotics is rampant in India, resulting in super bugs that are resistant to all known types of drugs. The major cause of the increase in anti-biotic resistance are **unnecessary prescription of drugs**, **lack of awareness among patients**, **by excessive usage on livestock** and **by poor sanitation**.
- Poor sanitation, corruption and low public health spending have a bigger role in pushing up drug-

resistant infections in low- and middle-income countries.


HOW ANTIBIOTIC RESISTANCE HAPPENS
Lots of germs and some are drug resistant
Antibiotics kill the bacteria causing the illnes as well as the good bacteria protecting the body from infection
The drug resistant bacteria is now able to grow and take over
Some bacteria give their drug resistance to other bacteria
- Normal bacterium
- Resistant bacterium
- Dead bacterium

- In the story of co-evolution and natural selection, bacteria have evolved to resist the threat posed by these drugs. Antibiotic resistance is a worldwide problem. But experts fear that India's excessive antibiotic usage is now leading to a powerful never-before-seen mutation within bacteria.

What needs to be done? Providing sanitation, clean water and good governance, increasing public health expenditure and better regulating the private health sector are all necessary to reduce antimicrobial resistance.

SOLAR ERUPTIONS

#SPACE

PRIMARY SOURCE | The Indian EXPRESS

Sun's Structure: The Sun has **six regions**: the core, the radiative zone, and the convective zone in the interior; the visible surface, called the photosphere; the chromosphere; and the outermost region, the corona.

SUN'S MAGNETIC FIELD

- The electric currents in the Sun generate a complex magnetic field that **extends out into space** to form the **interplanetary magnetic field**.
- The volume of space controlled by the Sun's magnetic field is called the **heliosphere**.
- The Sun's magnetic field is **carried out through the solar system by the solar wi**nd—a stream of electrically charged gas blowing outward from the Sun in all directions.
- Since the Sun rotates, the magnetic field spins out into a **large rotating spiral, known as the Parker spiral**.
- The height of the Sun's activity, known as **solar maximum**, is a time of solar storms: sunspots, solar flares and coronal mass ejections.
- These are caused by irregularities in the Sun's magnetic field and can release huge amounts of energy and particles, some of which reach us here on Earth.
- This space weather can damage satellites, corrode pipelines and affect power grids.

WHY THE SUN'S OUTER ATMOSPHERE, OR THE SOLAR CORONA, IS HOTTER THAN ITS SURFACE?

- According to the scientist, interaction of magnetic fields of opposite polarity — North and South — through a process that solar physicists call **magnetic**

flux cancellation provides the energy for the eruptions called **solar spicules.**

- The new observations suggest that spicules **transfer heat to the corona** which the scientists say could explain the corona's high temperature of about a million degrees Celsius compared to the Sun's surface temperature of about 6,000°C.

PRACTICE QUESTIONS

MCQS

Q.1) Consider the following statements:

1. Solar corona is hotter than sun's surface.
2. The volume of space controlled by the Sun's magnetic field is called the heliosphere.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

(a) 1 only (b) 2 only
(c) Both 1 and 2 (d) Neither 1 nor 2

Q.2) Consider the following statements:

1. Raster and Satellite Imagery can be used to create 3D models of areas and localities.
2. Point Clouds helps in getting a bird's eye view of what the Earth looks like.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

(a) 1 only (b) 2 only
(c) Both 1 and 2 (d) Neither 1 nor 2

Q.3) Consider the following statements:

1. Nanophotonics is the scientific study of the interaction of matter and light at the nanometer scale.
2. Nanophotonics in not found naturally.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

(a) 1 only (b) 2 only
(c) Both 1 and 2 (d) Neither 1 nor 2

Q.4) Consider the following statements:

1. Bacteria develop drug resistance when they are within the body and not outside.
2. The intake of drugs stopped mid-way could lead to the development of drug resistance.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

(a) 1 only (b) 2 only
(c) Both 1 and 2 (d) Neither 1 nor 2

Q.5) Parker spiral is

(a) associated with Saturn rings
(b) associated with Asteroid belt
(c) associated with Exoplanets
(d) associated with magnetic field of sun

Answers: *1-c, 2-d, 3-a, 4-b, 5-d*

GEOGRAPHY, ENVIRONMENT, BIODIVERSITY & DISASTER MANAGEMENT

GS PAPER (PRELIMS) AND GS PAPER I & III (MAIN)

LEAD ARTICLE

FLOODS IN UTTARAKHAND

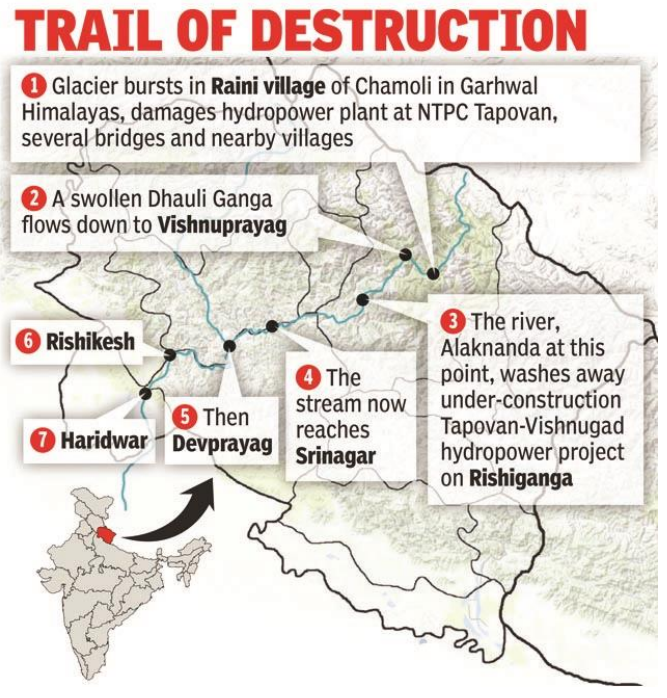
DISASTER

PRIMARY SOURCE: DownToEarth | SECONDARY SOURCE: The Indian EXPRESS

IN NEWS

Glacial burst on Nanda Devi triggered an avalanche and caused flash floods in Rishiganga and Dhauliganga rivers in Chamoli district of Uttarakhand. Later, flood warnings were issued in downstream Uttar Pradesh for what was described as a "glacial burst" by the Centre's National Crisis Management Committee (NCMC).

- While the Rishiganga hydel project had an installed capacity of 13.2 megawatts (MW), the 520 MW NTPC Tapovan-Vishnugad project on the Dhauliganga was much larger.
- The Dhauliganga is one of the six source streams of the Ganges river. It meets the Alaknanda River at Vishnuprayag at the base of Joshimath mountain in Uttarakhand.

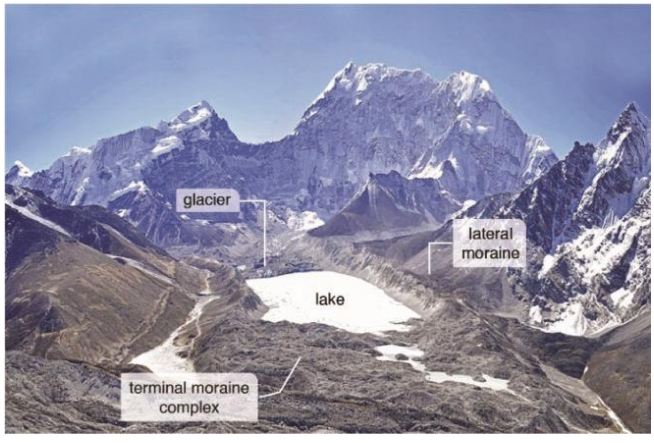

TRAIL OF DESTRUCTION
1 Glacier bursts in Raini village of Chamoli in Garhwal Himalayas, damages hydropower plant at NTPC Tapovan, several bridges and nearby villages
2 A swollen Dhauli Ganga flows down to Vishnuprayag
3 The river, Alaknanda at this point, washes away under-construction Tapovan-Vishnugad hydropower project on Rishiganga
4 The stream now reaches Srinagar
5 Then Devprayag
6 Rishikesh
7 Haridwar

WHAT COULD HAVE CAUSED THIS DISASTER?

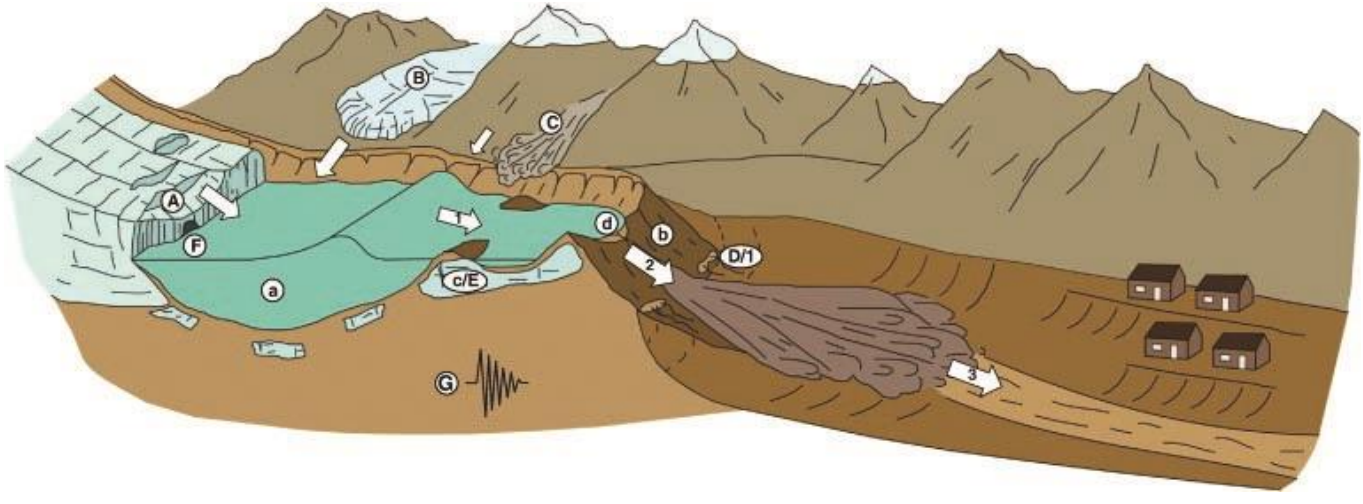
- **Possibility 1: Natural Dam Got Broken**
  - It is possible that an avalanche or a landslide created an obstruction in the flow of the river or streams in the upper mountains, resulting in a makeshift dam-like situation.

- When the pressure of the flowing water became large, the dam probably gave away, leading to a sudden gush of water.

- **Possibility 2: Glacial lake outburst flood**



- Retreating glaciers, like several in the Himalayas, usually result in the formation of lakes at their tips, called proglacial lakes, often bound only by sediments and boulders.
- If the boundaries of these lakes are breached, it can lead to large amounts of water rushing down to nearby streams and rivers, gathering momentum on the way by picking up sediments, rocks and other material, and resulting in flooding downstream.
- GLOF events are not unusual, but their impact depends on the size of the proglacial lake that burst, and location. The breach can be caused by several reasons — in this particular case, for instance, **an avalanche was reported in the region a couple of days ago.**



CAN CLIMATE CHANGE HAS ANY ROLE TO PLAY?

- As of now, the incident does not seem to have any direct linkage with construction-related activities, or the presence of big dams, but climate change as a factor is not something that can be ignored, particularly in the formation of proglacial lakes.
- A majority of the glaciers in the Himalayas are known to be receding, all leading to the formation of several proglacial lakes.

HEP PLANTS

ENERGY #DISASTER

PRIMARY SOURCE SUSTAIN EUROPE

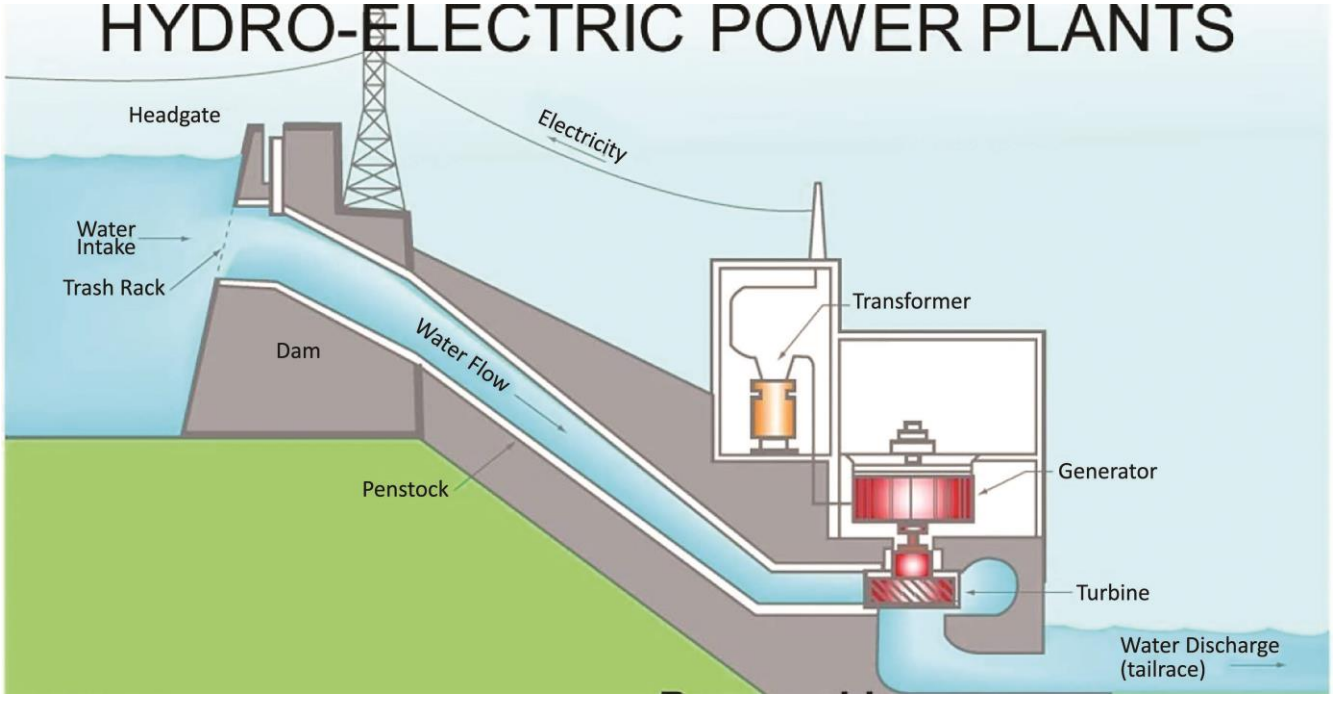
SECONDARY SOURCE usgs.gov

CONTEXT

The hydropower projects in Uttarakhand are particularly vulnerable to damage by extreme flooding events, such as the deluge in the Rishiganga river that damaged at least two plants.

The 13.2-MW Rishiganga project is classified as a "small hydropower" project (<25 MW) and there are seven such projects under various stages of development in Uttarakhand.

There are eight projects above 25 MW and the damaged Tapovan-Vishnugadh project being developed by the National Thermal Power Corporation (NTPC) falls into this category.



Hydroelectric power, also called hydropower, electricity produced from generators driven by turbines that convert the potential energy of falling or fast-flowing water into mechanical energy. In the early 21st century, hydroelectric power was the most widely utilized form of renewable energy; in 2019 it accounted for more than 18 percent of the world's total power generation capacity.

The flood incident has raised concerns over the viability of Hydroelectric projects.

HYDROELECTRIC POWER: PROS

Renewable

- Hydroelectric energy is considered renewable because it uses the earth's water to generate electricity.
- Due to the natural water cycle, water is recycled back to the earth and will never run out of supply.
- The amount of hydroelectricity produced can vary as a result of drought and lower water levels but this is seasonal.

Clean and safe

- Unlike fossil fuels, biomass and nuclear power, hydroelectric power is a clean and green alternative source of energy.
- Since hydroelectric dams do not use fuel, they do not release any greenhouse gases or toxins into the environment.
- As a result, hydroelectric power features prominently in the clean energy plans of many countries.

Flexible

- Hydropower is a flexible source of electricity as hydro plants can be scaled up and down quickly to meet the changing energy demands.

- Furthermore, compared to gas turbines or steam plants the start-up time taken by hydro turbines is very less.
- Hydropower units also serve as backup for non-hydro generators.

Cost-competitive energy source

- Despite expensive upfront building costs, hydroelectric power is a cost-competitive source of energy.
- Hydropower plants require low cost of maintenance and operation. Since they have few parts, the plants need minimal replacements.
- Also, dams are typically designed for long-term use and are therefore capable of producing hydroelectric power up to an average lifetime of 50 – 100 years.

HYDROELECTRIC POWER: CONS

Failure risks

- As dams hold back large volumes of water, a sub-standard construction, natural disasters or sabotage, and the extreme influx of water can be catastrophic to downriver settlements and infrastructure.
- These failures not only affect the supply of power but also affect the flora, fauna and other forms of life.

Methane emissions

- Reservoirs and hydropower plants are often considered as environment friendly but hydroelectric dams contribute more to global warming than previously estimated.
- Researchers found that plant material in flooded areas begin to rot and decompose in an anaerobic environment.
- This will result in the release of substantial amounts of carbon dioxide and methane, which leads to an increase in pollution levels.

May lead to droughts

- One of the main downsides of setting up hydroelectric power plants is the occurrence of local droughts.
- The overall cost of energy is calculated depending on the availability of water and a drought could potentially affect this, causing people not to acquire the power they need.

Ecosystem damage and loss of wetlands

- Big reservoirs associated with traditional hydroelectric power plants cause submersion of extensive areas upstream of the dams, sometimes destroying lowland and riverine valley forests, marshland and grasslands.
- HEP can also spell doom to surrounding aquatic ecosystems both upstream and downstream of the plant site.
- Since turbine gates are often opened intermittently, interruptions of natural water flow can have a great impact on the river ecosystem and the environment.
- The fish in the river can be affected by the draining of the water from the dam as well as the fish that is in the dam.
- Animals such as birds, cranes and other aquatic birds, and some plant species thrive in marshy habitats. However, because of the hydroelectric power plant construction, these habitats will be destroyed.

Relocation due to risk of floods

- Local populations living downstream can become vulnerable to flooding due to the possible strong water currents that might be released from the dams.
- As a result, people are forced to relocate to facilitate the construction of the dams needed to generate hydroelectricity.

SAFAR

POLLUTION #AIR QUALITY

PRIMARY SOURCE SAFAR-India

CONTEXT

The Air Quality across India's major towns keeps on fluctuating. As this data appears frequently in the newspaper, it is important for us to cover the basics of Air Quality and how is it measured?

SAFAR

- Govt. of India introduced **"System of Air Quality and Weather Forecasting and Research" known as "SAFAR"** for greater metropolitan cities of India to **provide location specific information on air quality** in near real time and its forecast 1-3 days in advance for the first time in India. It has been combined with the early warning system on weather parameters.
- The **SAFAR system is developed by Indian Institute of Tropical Meteorology, Pune, along with ESSO partner institutions namely India Meteorological Department (IMD)** and **National Centre for Medium Range Weather Forecasting (NCMRWF)**.
- The implementation of SAFAR is made possible with an **active collaboration** with local municipal corporations and various local educational institutions and governmental agencies in that Metro city.
- The **ultimate objective** of the project is to increase awareness among general public regarding the air quality in their city well in advance so that appropriate mitigation measures and systematic action can be taken up for betterment of air quality and related health issues. It engineers awareness drive by educating public, prompting self-mitigation and also to help develop mitigation strategies for policy makers.

HOW THE MONITORING IS DONE?

- Air Quality monitoring is not an easy task, the common mistake **which any one can do is representing city air quality based on single station value or single hour data.**
- To provide an AQI representative of a city, single station data is not suitable. As per international guidelines, correct way to know ONE index for a city air quality is to consider different microenvironments.
- Based on scientific knowledge one should develop the methodology for the same. For a typical metro city Background; Commercial; Urban complex; Sub-urban; Residential; Industrial; Road side; Traffic junction etc. are the microenvironments which should be covered in the monitoring network.

AIR QUALITY MONITORING
Measurement of environmentally relevant materials and odors
Use of mobile and stationary measuring equipment
Determination and evaluation of air pollution
Analysis of air quality with reference to the sources of emission
Determination of metrological data for forecasting
Polluter analyses & expert opinions in the event of complaints
Creation of appraisals

- The SAFAR observational network of **Air Quality Monitoring Stations (AQMS)** and **Automatic Weather Stations (AWS)** established within city limits represents **selected microenvironments of the city including industrial, residential, background/ cleaner, urban complex, agricultural zones etc**. as per international guidelines which ensures the true representation of city environment.
- **Air Quality indicators are monitored at about 3 m height from the ground with online sophisticated instruments**. These instruments are operated round the clock and data is recorded and stored at every 5 minute interval for quality check and further analysis.

WHAT IS MEASURED?

- **Pollutants monitored**: PM1, PM2.5, PM10, Ozone, CO, NOx (NO, NO2), SO2, BC, Methane (CH4), Non-methane hydrocarbons (NMHC), VOC's, Benzene, Mercury
- **Monitored Meteorological Parameters**: UV Radiation, Rainfall, Temperature, Humidity, Wind speed, Wind direction, solar radiation

ABOUT AIR QUALITY INDEX

- Air Quality Index is a tool for effective communication of air quality status to people in terms, which are easy to understand. It transforms complex air quality data

of various pollutants into a single number (index value), nomenclature and colour.

- **There are six AQI categories**, namely Good + Satisfactory, Moderately polluted, Poor, Very Poor, and Severe.
- Each of these categories is decided **based on ambient concentration values of air pollutants and their likely health impacts** (known as health breakpoints).
- AQ sub-index and health breakpoints are evolved for eight pollutants **(PM10, PM2.5, NO2, SO2, CO, O3, NH3, and Pb)** for which short-term (upto 24-hours) National Ambient Air Quality Standards are prescribed.
- Based on the measured ambient concentrations of a pollutant, sub-index is calculated, which is a linear function of concentration (e.g. the sub-index for PM2.5 will be 51 at concentration 31 µg/m3, 100 at concentration 60 µg/m3, and 75 at concentration of 45 µg/m3). The worst sub-index determines the overall AQI. AQI categories and health breakpoints for the eight pollutants are as follow:

AQI Category(Range)			PM10 24 - hr (µg/m³)		PM2.5 24 - hr (µg/m³)		NO2 24 - hr (ppb)		O3 8 - hr (ppb)		CO 8 - hr (ppm)	
	I low	I high	C low	C high	C low	C high	C low	C high	C low	C high	C low	C high
Good	0	50	0	50	0	30	0	21	0	25	0.0	0.9
Satisfactory	50	100	50	100	30	60	22	43	26	51	1.0	1.7
Moderate	100	200	100	250	60	90	44	96	52	86	1.8	8.7
Poor	200	300	250	350	90	120	97	149	87	106	8.8	14.8
Very Poor	300	400	350	430	120	250	150	213	107	381	14.9	29.7
Severe	400	500	430	700	250	380	214	750	382	450	29.8	40

OIL SPILLS

POLLUTION

PRIMARY SOURCE THE HINDU

IN NEWS

An emergency clean-up was launched along the coast to mitigate the fallout of a furnace oil leak into the sea from the Kerala government undertaking Travancore Titanium Products Ltd. (TTP) at Kochuveli near the State capital.

- **Oil spill** refers to release of a liquid petroleum hydrocarbon/crude oil into the environment, especially the marine ecosystem, due to human activity, and is a form of pollution.
- Upto two-thirds of an oil-spill can evaporate in the first few days, but before the light, toxic compounds evaporate, they kill fish and animal life and pose harm to future generations.
- The thick oil also washes ashore creating reservoirs on the beaches of toxic chemicals that can have a lasting effect on the environment.
- The rest of the floating oil breaks up into globules, which is whipped by the wind into a brown, foamy **"chocolate mousse".**

IMPACT OF OIL SPILL

- **Environmental Impact** – Oil spills harm air quality as the chemicals in crude oil are mostly hydrocarbons that contains toxic chemicals such as *benzenes, toluene, poly-aromatic hydrocarbon and oxygenated polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons*. These

chemicals can introduce adverse health effects when being inhaled into human body.

- **Impact on marine life –**
  - **Destroys the insulating ability of fur-bearing mammals** - such as sea otters, and the water repellence of a bird's feathers, exposing these creatures to the harsh elements. Without the ability to repel water and insulate from the cold water, birds and mammals will die from hypothermia.
  - **Clogs blowholes of whales and dolphins**, making it impossible for them to breathe properly and disrupting their ability to communicate.
  - **Kills fish** - When exposed to oil, adult fish may be poisoned and may experience reduced growth, enlarged livers, changes in heart and respiration rates, fin erosion, and reproduction impairment. Fish eggs and larvae can be especially sensitive to lethal and sub-lethal impacts.
  - **Suffocates wildlife** as oil forms a film on the surface, it reduces the amount of light and oxygen passing into the water. This suffocates marine life or causes it to go into a state of "heat coma".
- **Underwater Impact**- When oil eventually stops floating on the water's surface and begins to sink into the marine environment, it has damaging effects on fragile underwater ecosystems, killing or contaminating fish and smaller organisms.
- **Impact on Aerial wildlife –**
  - **Mass death of birds** because they cannot fly with wings coated by heavy oil.
  - **Disrupt migratory patterns** by contaminating areas where migrating birds normally stop. Oil spills also damage nesting grounds, potentially causing serious long-term effects on entire species.
- **Impact on humans –**
  - An oil spill represents an immediate fire hazard.
  - Contaminates food supply as oil spills make fish unsafe for humans to eat.
  - Spilled oil can also contaminate drinking water supplies.
  - Ruins aesthetics as when an oil spill reaches a beach, it coats and clings to every rock and grain of sand.

In open-water marine spills, the primary response objectives are:

- To prevent the spill from reaching shore,
- To reduce the impact on marine life, and
- To speed the degradation of any unrecovered oil.

OIL SPILLS REMOVAL PROCESSES INCLUDE

- Oil spilled in the ocean, creates what is known as **oil slicks**. This is highly hazardous because the emulsion caused by wave action is very resistant. If not dealt with swiftly, it can soon reach coastlines and beaches, thereby multiplying the effects of the catastrophe.
- **In Situ Burning**: In situ burning is the process of burning spilled oil where it is on the ocean. But it can only be done in low wind, and can cause air pollution.
- **Skimming:** Removing oil from seawater can be a daunting task. Oil has a lower specific gravity (0.79 to 0.84) than seawater (1.023 to 1.028) and floats on top of seawater for that reason, which makes "skimming" one of the most effective "immediate" ways to remove crude oil from seawater. Skimming removes oil from the sea surface before it reaches sensitive areas along a coastline.
- **Vacuum and centrifuge**: Oil can be sucked up along with the water, and then a centrifuge can be used to separate the oil from the water – allowing a tanker to be filled with near pure oil. Usually, the water is returned to the sea, making the process more efficient, but allowing small amounts of oil to go back as well.
- **Dispersion:**
  - Natural dispersion occurs when waves at the ocean surface have enough turbulent energy to allow surface oil to mix into the water column.
  - **Chemical dispersion**: Adding chemical dispersants speeds up the process of natural dispersion and in dispersed form. Releasing chemical dispersants, usually from a small plane or a response vessel, on an oil slick breaks down the oil into smaller droplets, allowing them to mix more easily into the water column. Smaller droplets of oil become more readily available to microbes that will eat them and break them down into less harmful compounds.

However, using dispersants has the drawbacks of shifting potential impacts to the marine life living in the water column and on the seafloor.

- **Bioremediation** refers to the use of specific microorganisms to remove any toxic or harmful substances. There are various classes of bacteria, fungi, archaea and algae that degrade petroleum products by metabolizing and breaking them into simpler and non-toxic molecules (mostly fatty acids and carbon dioxide).
  - Ex **- Oilzapper**, essentially a cocktail of five different bacterial strains detoxifies oily sludge's and cleans up oil slicks.
  - **Oilivorous-s**, though similar to Oilzapper, is the new version that contains one more bacterial species and is suitable for cleaning up oil slicks.

Thus, Clean up and recovery from an oil spill is difficult and depends upon many factors such as severity of environmental damage caused by an oil spill depends on many factors, including the amount of oil spilled, type and weight of oil, location of the spill, species of wildlife in the area, timing of breeding cycles and seasonal migrations, and even the weather at sea during and after the oil spill.

ANDAMAN AND NICOBAR ISLANDS

LOCATION #CONSERVATION

PRIMARY SOURCE THE HINDU SECONDARY SOURCE idsa

IN NEWS

A plan for the sustainable and holistic development of the 680 sq km, fragile Little Andaman Island in the Andaman and Nicobar group has raised the alarm among conservationists.

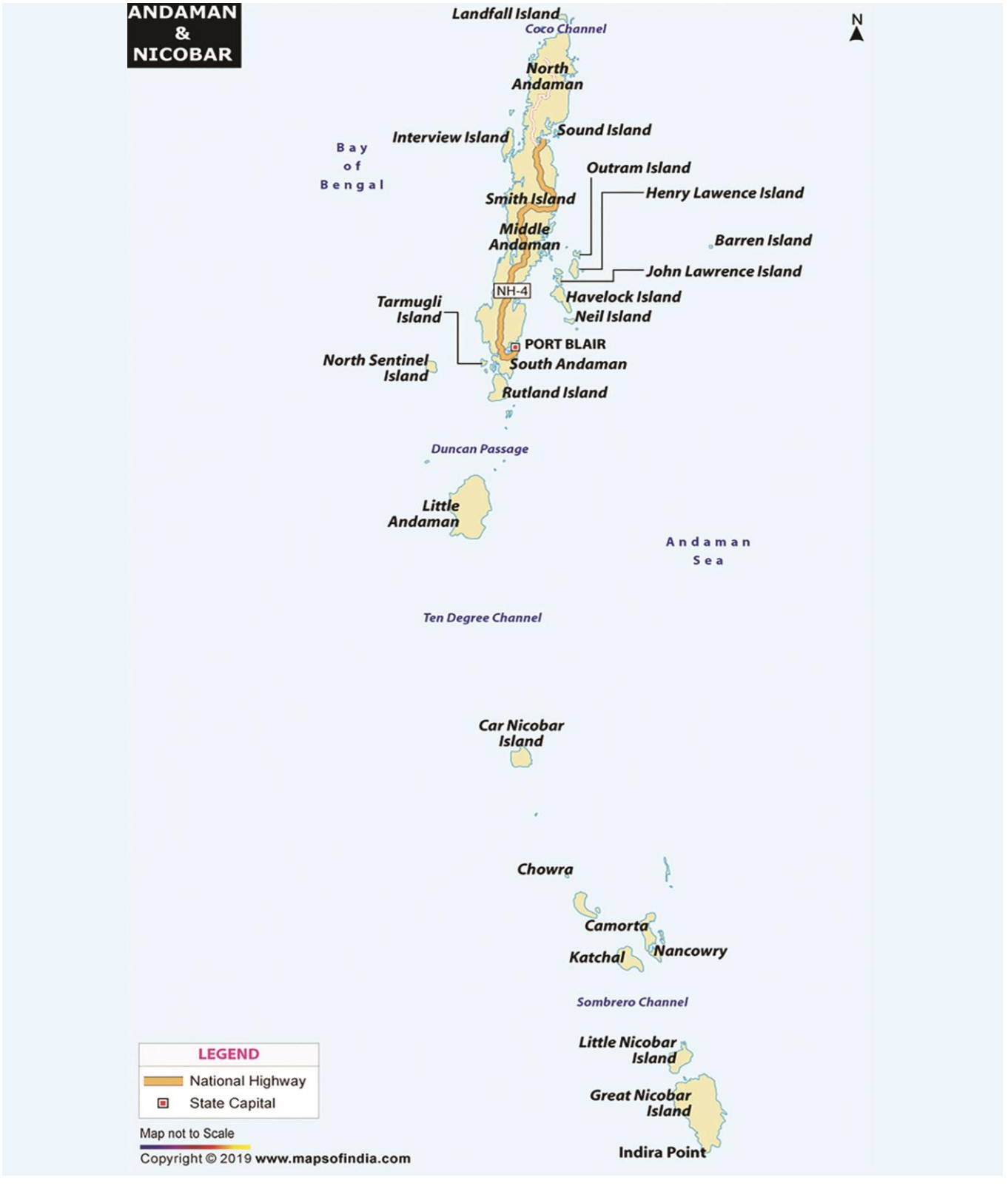
SIGNIFICANCE

- Strategic location
- Andaman and Nicobar Islands are of maritime importance to India with its potential for **trade and surveillance.**
- The A&N Islands alone account for **30% of India's Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ)-revenue** - given their unrealized potential, bridging the infrastructure gap becomes crucial.

- **A large port facility at Campbell Bay could offer better opportunity for India** to trade with the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN).
  - It will also help India to build better economic relations with ASEAN region.
  - The importance of the islands has increased in light of India's 'Act East' policy.
- Developing the islands as prime Tourist Hotspots can help create many forward and backward linkages and help boost the economy of the regions to a large extent.
- The building of a trans-shipment hub will be critical for India's trade and help the group of islands become an important centre of the blue economy.
- Due to China's belligerent expansionist policy in the Indian Ocean Region (IOR), there is a need to develop critical infrastructure and upgrade the military base in these regions. For instance, China pushing for infrastructure projects, like the **Kra Canal,** will likely influence the new emerging security architecture in the Indo-Pacific.
- India's only tri-service command is established at the A&N Islands at the entrance of the Malacca Strait, the 2.8 km long -world's most congested choke point, and the primary route for Chinese oil supply.

- Will help in the working of the 'Quad' coalition group by India, Japan, Australia and the US , apart from the Malabar Naval Exercises by the same nations.

INITIATIVES FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF ANDAMAN & NICOBAR ISLAND



- In 2016, the government identified 26 Islands for promoting and implementing development based on sustainable approach to building a thriving economy of the project islands.
- The government also announced laying of submarine optical fibre cable between Chennai and A&N Islands so as to increase telephone and internet connectivity in the region by December 2018. It was inaugurated in August 2020.
  - The fibre connects Chennai and Port Blair and seven other islands- Swaraj Deep (Havelock), Long island etc.
  - The connectivity project was funded by the Centre through the Universal Service Obligation Fund under the Ministry of Communications.
- In 2017, the **Island Development Agency (IDA)** was established for the holistic development of the islands, focusing on community-based tourism. IDA is chaired by Union Home Minister. Other members are the Cabinet secretary, home secretary, secretary (environment, forests and climate change), secretary (tourism) and secretary (tribal welfare).
- The 2016 Indo-Japan Joint Statement on Bilateral Cooperation envisioned to develop "Smart Islands" on the line of the 'Smart Cities' project.
- The 'Sustainable Development of Little Andaman Island - Vision Document', is the NITI Aayog's proposal to leverage the strategic location and natural features of the island.
- A **free trade zone** will be developed as per the plan document of NITI Aayog and will compete with Singapore and Hong Kong.
- NITI Aayog is also working on a revenue model to build sea connectivity projects in the public-private partnership mode, especially for ships carrying automobiles.
- Recently, the Prime Minister has declared that the Andaman and Nicobar islands will be developed as a "maritime and start-up hub".

'BLOCKS' TO DEVELOPMENT

There are certain factors, the vision document notes, that could prevent Little Andaman from becoming the new Singapore — factors that are "stopping us from developing these into veritable jewels for the country". These include:

- lack of good connectivity with Indian mainland and global cities.
- a fragile biodiversity and natural ecosystems and certain Supreme Court notifications that pose an impediment to development.
- "Presence of indigenous tribes and concerns for their welfare".
- 95% of Little Andaman is covered in forest, a large part of it the pristine evergreen type. Some 640 sq. km of the island is Reserve Forest under the Indian Forest Act, and nearly 450 sq km is protected as the Onge Tribal Reserve, creating a unique and rare socio-ecological-historical complex of high importance.
- West Bay on the western coast is **one of the most important nesting sites of the globally endangered Giant Leatherback sea turtle.**

The vision needs 240 sq km (35%) of this land and the solutions suggested are simple and straightforward — de-reserve 32% of the reserved forest and de-notify 138 sq km or 31% of the tribal reserve. And if the tribals become an impediment, the vision suggests that they "can be relocated to other parts of the island".

WAY FORWARD

- Although, the need for civil infrastructure development in Island regions is unquestionable, in the wake of existing geo-strategic position of these islands, upgradation of defence facilities is equally important. This will constructively channelize the positive externalities of such assets to enhance the living conditions of entire populace.
- However, due attention needs to be paid so as to not disturb the ecological balance, disrupt local livelihood-activities, and engage all stakeholders in the decision making process while ensuring that sufficient institutions and mechanisms exist for grievance redressal, compensation and rehabilitation.

GIANT LEATHERBACK

CONSERVATION # BIODIVERSITY

PRIMARY SOURCE THE HINDU

IN NEWS

Proposals for tourism and port development in the Andaman and Nicobar (A&N) Islands have conservationists worried over the fate of some of the most important nesting populations of the Giant Leatherback turtle in this part of the Indian Ocean.

GIANT LEATHERBACK

- **Scientific name and Physiology**
  - Dermochelys coriacea
  - Leatherbacks rely on a unique suite of **adaptations** including large body size, changes in activity and metabolic rate, peripheral insulation (i.e. fat), and adjustments in blood flow to maintain stable core body temperatures in varying water temperatures from temperate to tropical latitudes.
  - Leatherbacks dive much deeper than other turtles, regularly reaching depths beyond 1,000 m (3,281 ft).
  - These are the **largest of the seven species of sea turtles** on the planet and also the most long-ranging, Leatherbacks are found in all oceans except the Arctic and the Antarctic.
- **Status**
  - Vulnerable
  - Listed in Schedule I of India's Wildlife Protection Act, 1972, according it the highest legal protection.
- **Distribution**
  - Circumglobally. Present in all world's oceans **except** Arctic and Antarctic
  - Nesting areas in tropics
  - Non-nesting range extends to sub-polar regions
  - Within the Indian Ocean, they nest only in Indonesia, Sri Lanka and the Andaman and Nicobar Islands.
- **Diet:** For all life stages, gelatinous zooplankton (jellies and jelly-like organisms)

WHAT IS THE PROBLEM?

- Surveys conducted in the A&N Islands over the past three decades have shown that the populations here could be among the most important colonies of the Leatherback globally.
- There is concern now, however, that **at least three key nesting beaches — two on Little Andaman Island and one on Great Nicobar Island — are under threat** due to mega "development" plans announced in recent months.
- These include NITI Aayog's ambitious tourism vision for Little Andaman and the proposal for a mega-shipment port at **Galathea Bay** on Great Nicobar Island.

SO WHAT IS THE DEVELOPMENT PLAN?

- The Little Andaman plan, which proposes phased growth of tourism on this virtually untouched island, has sought the **de-reservation of over 200 sq km of pristine rainforest and also of about 140 sq** km of the Onge Tribal Reserve.
- Two sites where key components of the tourism plan are to be implemented are both **Leatherback nesting sites** — South Bay along the southern coast of the island and West Bay along its western coast.
- South Bay is proposed to be part of the "Leisure Zone" where a film city, a residential district and a tourism special economic zone are to come up. West Bay is to be part of West Bay Nature Retreat with theme resorts, underwater resorts, beach hotels and high-end residential villas.
- For the Leatherback, perhaps even more important is Great Nicobar Island, the southernmost of the A&N group. Large numbers have been recorded nesting here — mainly on the long and wide beaches at the mouth of the Dagmar and Alexandria rivers on the west coast and at the mouth of the Galathea river along its south eastern coast.
- **Galathea Bay** was, in fact, proposed as a wildlife sanctuary in 1997 for the protection of turtles and was also the site of a long-term monitoring programme.

WHAT GOVT IS DOING TO RESCUE LEATHERBACK TURTLES?

- The A&N Islands are prominent in the **National Marine Turtle Action Plan** released on February 1, 2021, by the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change.
- The plan notes that "India has identified all its important sea turtle nesting habitats as '**Important**

Coastal and Marine Biodiversity Areas' and included them in the **Coastal Regulation Zone (CRZ) – 1".**

- South Bay and West Bay on Little Andaman and Galathea on Great Nicobar, along with other nesting beaches in the islands, find a specific mention here as "Important Marine Turtle Habitats in India" and the largest Leatherback nesting grounds in India.
- The plan identifies coastal development, including construction of ports, jetties, resorts and industries, as major threats to turtle populations. It also asks for assessments of the environmental impact of marine and coastal development that may affect marine turtle populations and their habitats.

So, govt is violating its own plan? Yes.

- Developments in the A&N Islands indicate, however, that even as the action plan was being finalised, **decisions were being made in violation of its basic concerns and premises**.
- Not only has the mega-tourism plan in Little Andaman been pushed in spite of serious objections by the A&N Forest Department, a major decision was also made recently on the **Galathea Bay Wildlife Sanctuary**.
- The A&N Port Management Board had in 2019 f**loated an expression of interest for the container transhipment terminal** here, along with that of a free trade warehousing zone, and the Prime Minister announced in August 2020 that a transhipment project would come up here on an investment of ₹10,000 crore.
- The scale of the project and the investment proposed indicate it could signal the end of a crucial Giant Leatherback nesting site.

WASTE-TO-ENERGY

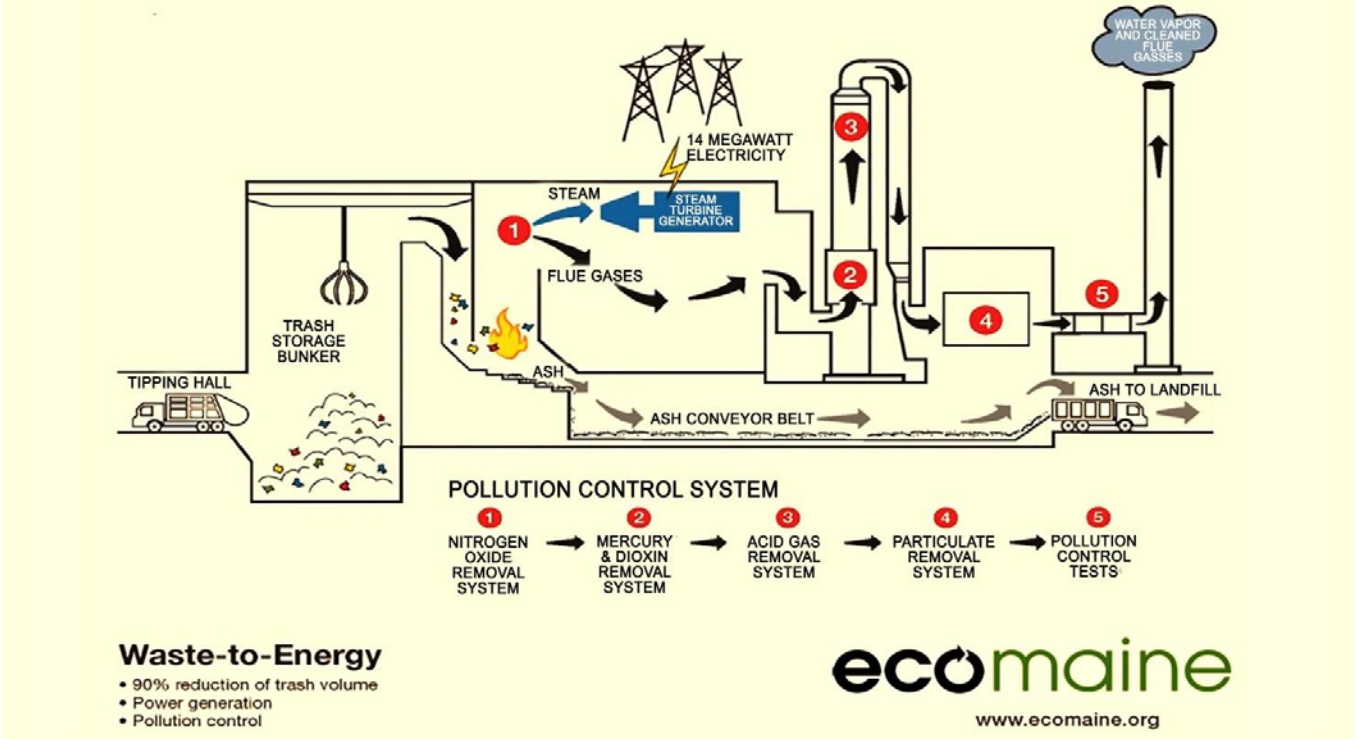
POLLUTION MANAGEMENT # ENERGY

PRIMARY SOURCE THE HINDU SECONDARY SOURCE DownToEarth

IN NEWS

Recently, Waste to energy plants were inaugurated at various places in India. This process of converting waste to energy has come into lime light in past decade because of both advantages and problems it creates.

Waste-to-Energy is the process of generating energy from the primary treatment of waste, or the processing of waste into a fuel source.



WHY WASTE TO ENERGY?

- *Waste management, sanitation* and Swatch Bharat Mission.
- Urban waste generation ~ ***62 million tonnes every year***. Municipal solid waste to energy market is growing at ~ 9.5%.
- The United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) estimates that more than 40 per cent of food produced is wasted in India. Organic waste has significant portion in overall waste generation in industrial/urban/ agricultural sector and therefore it can be used for energy generation.
- *Treatment of waste* resulting in
  - mitigating the harm to land and water bodies
  - Safe landfills
- *Renewable source of energy* - The total estimated energy generation potential from urban and industrial organic waste in India is approximately 5690 MW.
- *New business opportunity* with appropriate technology and government incentive.
- International expansion possibilities for Indian companies, especially expansion into other Asian countries.
- Success in municipal solid waste management will lead to opportunities in sewage waste, industrial waste and hazardous waste by development of new technology.

According to the Ministry of New and Renewable Energy, there exists a potential of about:

- 1700 MW from urban waste
- 1300 MW from industrial waste.

NITI Aayog, as part of the *Swachh Bharat Mission*, envisaged

- 800 MW from WTE plants by 2018-19.
- *Waste-to-Energy Corporation of India,* for constructing incineration plants through PPP models.

PROBLEMS OF WTE PLANTS

- ***Inefficiency –*** Municipal solid waste (MSW) in India
  - Has low calorific value and high moisture content.
  - Are unsegregated having high inert content.
- ***Pollution –***
  - Carcinogenic chemicals are released due to chlorinated hydrocarbons like PVC.
- High cost of electricity generated by waste. WTE ~ Rs 7/kWh; coal ~ Rs 3-4 per kWh
- *Technologies like bio-methanation* are imported.
- *Protest and criticism* – eg: against the *Okhla WTE plant* in Delhi for polluting the environment.

Way Forward: Niti Aayog has also proposed the Waste to Energy Corporation of India, a nodal agency to set up plants through public-private partnership.

- Policy guidelines – from State Governments in respect of allotment of land, supply of garbage.
- Regulatory support – ***Power purchase obligation***. Eg: Delhi Metro has started receiving 2 MW power from a 12 MW capacity waste-to-energy plant set up in Ghazipur.
- Compliance of MSW Rules 2000 – to ensure segregated solid waste.
- Compliance of Waste Management rules 2016 to phase out PVC.
- Strengthening Municipal Corporations – financial and human resource.
- PPP model for WTE plants as recommended by Task force on WTE headed by K Kasturirangan.
- Technology
- Appropriate filtering mechanisms
- Railways can take up such projects near big railway stations. Eg: ***WTE plant at Jaipur railway station.***
- **Spreading awareness** - Protection and improvement of our environment as envisaged in Article 51 A(g) of our Constitution.
- ***Marketing of concept***

Case Studies

- **Alappuzha municipality**
  - Biogas plants in every locality
  - Piped compost unit within houses.
  - Aerobic compost units in public places
- **Sweden import solid waste to generate energy and create employment**

TECHNOLOGY FOR WASTE-TO-ENERGY

While ***incineration*** and ***bio methanation*** are the most common technologies, ***pyrolysis*** and ***gasification*** are also emerging as preferred options.

a) ***Thermal Conversion***

- Degradation and complete oxidation of waste under high temperature.
- Most important form is **incineration.**
- Disadvantage is its emission characteristics.

b) ***Thermo-chemical conversion***

- High temperature driven decomposition of organic matter.
- Useful for organic non-biodegradable matter and low moisture content.
- Most important forms are ***Pyrolysis*** and ***Gasification.***
- The products such as producer gas, exhaust gases etc can be used purely as heat energy or further processed chemically, to produce a range of end products.

c) ***Bio-chemical conversion***

- Enzymatic decomposition of organic matter by microbial action to produce methane gas, alcohol etc.
- Preferred for wastes having high percentage of organic, bio-degradable matter and high level of moisture.
- Major forms are ***bio-methanation*** and ***fermentation.***

d) ***Electrochemical conversion***

- *Microbial fuel cells* (MFC).
- The reduction-oxidation machinery of immobilized microbial cells is catalytically exploited.
- At a nascent level in India as well as worldwide.

- To recover energy from waste and effluent generated from industries, India has set up 186 waste-to-energy projects for generation of biogas, bioCNG power with a cumulative capacity of 317.03 MW so far.
- China has already fast-forwarded itself in that direction with ***300 waste-to-energy plants in place***, with the government setting a target of disposing a third of its garbage through energy plants by 2030.

VEMBANAD LAKE

CONSERVATION

PRIMARY SOURCE THE HINDU SECONDARY SOURCE The Indian EXPRESS

IN NEWS

Recently, authorities initiated preliminary steps to demolish the illegally constructed villas of Kapico Kerala Resorts Private Limited on Nediyathuruthu island in Vembanad Lake here.

ABOUT VEMBANAD LAKE

- Vembanad is the **longest lake** in India, and the largest lake in the state of Kerala.
- With an area of 2033 square kilometres, it is the **second largest Ramsar site** in India only after the Sundarbans in West Bengal.
- It is **fed by 10 rivers** and typical of large estuarine systems on the western coast, renowned for its clams and supporting the third largest waterfowl population in India during the winter months.
- **Several groups of small islands** including Vypin, Mulavukad, Vallarpadam, Willingdon Island are located in the Kochi Lake portion. Kochi Port is built around the Willingdon Island and the Vallarpadam island.

- **The Nehru Trophy Boat Race is conducted in a portion of the lake.**
- High levels of pollution have been noticed at certain hotspots of the Vembanad backwaters.
- The Government of India has identified the Vembanad wetland under the National Wetlands Conservation Programme.
- The lake is bordered by Alappuzha, Kottayam, and Ernakulam districts. It is situated at the sea level, and is separated from the Laccadive Sea by a narrow barrier island. Canals link the lake to other coastal lakes in the north and south.
- Flood protection for thickly-populated coastal areas of three districts of Kerala is considered a major benefit, groundwater recharge helps to supply well water for the region, and the value of the system for the local transport of people and trade is considerable.

MAN-TIGER (ANIMAL) CONFLICT

CONSERVATION

PRIMARY SOURCE | The Indian EXPRESS | SECONDARY SOURCE | DownToEarth

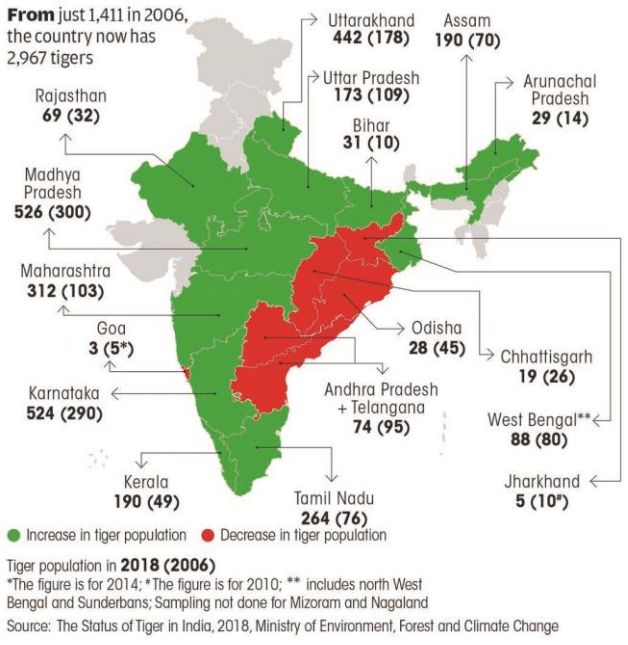
CONTEXT

According to 4th Tiger Census, there are approximately 2,967 tigers in India. Tigers count in India has increased from 1,411 in 2006 to 1,706 in 2010 and to 2,226 in 2014, marking the success of Project Tiger.

*India has achieved the goal of doubling the number of tigers as highlighted by the **St Petersburg declaration 2010**. However, according to the National Tiger Conservation Authority (NTCA), India can have a maximum of 3,000 tigers with respect to the available area of tiger reserves.*

***Increased Tiger population has resulted in Man-Animal Conflict (MAC),** as the human population expands and natural habitats shrink, people and animals are increasingly coming into conflict over living space and food.*

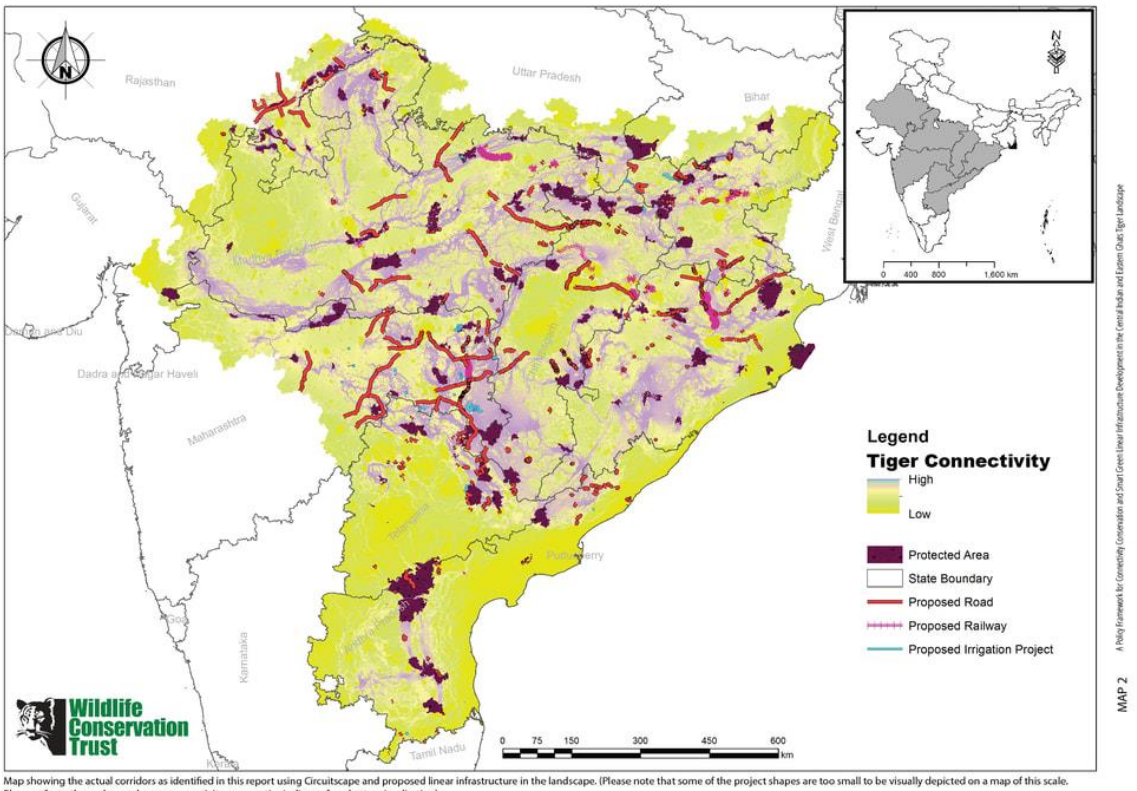
According to data from the MoEFCC, more than 1,608 humans were killed in conflict cases involving tigers, leopards, bears and elephants between 2013 and 2017.


From just 1,411 in 2006, the country now has 2,967 tigers
Uttarakhand 442 (178)
Assam 190 (70)
Uttar Pradesh 173 (109)
Arunachal Pradesh 29 (14)
Rajasthan 69 (32)
Bihar 31 (10)
Madhya Pradesh 526 (300)
Maharashtra 312 (103)
Goa 3 (5*)
Odisha 28 (45)
Chhattisgarh 19 (26)
Karnataka 524 (290)
Andhra Pradesh + Telangana 74 (95)
West Bengal** 88 (80)
Kerala 190 (49)
Tamil Nadu 264 (76)
Jharkhand 5 (10*)
Increase in tiger population
Decrease in tiger population
Tiger population in 2018 (2006)
*The figure is for 2014; * The figure is for 2010; ** includes north West Bengal and Sunderbans; Sampling not done for Mizoram and Nagaland
Source: The Status of Tiger in India, 2018, Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change

Only 5% of India's geographical area is in the protected area category. This space is not enough to have a full-fledged habitat for wild animals. This leads to wildlife-animal conflict.

CAUSES OF MAN-ANIMAL CONFLICT VIS-À-VIS TIGERS

- A territorial animal like a male tiger needs an area of 60-100 sq km. But the area allocated to an entire tiger reserve, like the **Bor Tiger Reserve in Maharashtra**, is around 140 sq km:
  - Tigers do move long distances, especially the male ones. It is natural for them.
  - Dominant tigers existing in one forest patch will not allow another tiger to take over the territory.
  - wildlife experts estimate that 29% of the tigers in India are outside the protected areas.
- **Increasing Infrastructure Development:** For example- the **Ken-Betwa river interlinking project will submerge 100 sq. km of Panna Tiger Reserve.**
- **Protected areas approach:** According to the Wildlife experts, if wildlife protection is confined to reserves and parks alone, several species will stand at the brink of extinction. For example **Great Indian Bustard, which is a Schedule-I animal. Despite having sanctuaries to itself, the bird has been driven to the brink of extinction.**
- **Fragmented protected areas**



Map showing the actual corridors as identified in this report using Circuitscape and proposed linear infrastructure in the landscape. (Please note that some of the project shapes are too small to be visually depicted on a map of this scale. Please refer to the web portal www.connectivityconservationindia.org for a better visualisation)

The boundaries of India shown in various maps in this report are neither authenticated nor verified and are not to scale. They are only meant for graphical representation. All efforts have been made to make them accurate, however WCT does not own any responsibility for the correctness or authenticity of the same.

RESOLVING MAN-ANIMAL CONFLICT VIS-À-VIS TIGERS

- Safeguarding Tiger corridors
- Building eco-bridges
- Use of Social Media
  - In the Western Ghats of India, a new conservation initiative has utilized texting as an early warning system to prevent human-elephant encounters. Elephant tracking collars embedded with SMS chips automatically text nearby residents, warning them of recent elephant movements. Such measures can be taken for tigers.
- Co-occurrence approach:
  - Building community participation in conservation is a better idea than just having protected areas. To ensure that money which comes in through tourism (of Tiger reserves) should be used for the development of the local villages as has been done in Tadoba tiger reserve, Maharashtra.

In Canada, authorities have constructed wildlife corridors, areas of preserved native habitat in human dominated regions, providing wildlife with a safe pathway as they travel between one to another.

- To keep elephants at a safe distance from their farms and homes, some African villagers have turned to two unlikely, all-natural solutions: bees and hot peppers. Elephants dislike the chemical capsaicin found in chili peppers, prompting farmers in Tanzania to smother their fences with a mixture of oil and chili peppers.
- The masks, to be worn at the back of the head, were a huge success in the Sundarbans.

TIGER CORRIDOR

- A tiger corridor is a stretch of land linking tiger habitats, allowing movement of tigers, prey and other wildlife. Without corridors tiger habitat can become fragmented and tiger populations isolated leaving the tigers vulnerable to localised extinction.
- Despite increasing development across fragment forests, farmlands, open areas etc. outside protected forests, these habitats are still conducive for movement of big cats in the central Indian landscape.

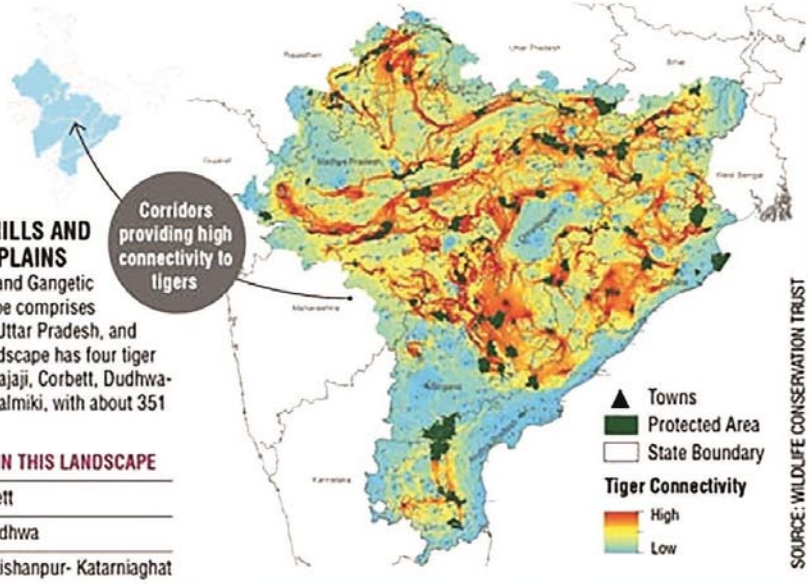
- This entire episode of the tiger's movement demonstrates for the public, society at large, and wildlife managers that how important these pathways and wildlife corridors are. They must be protected.

  We must also remember how important land-use practices in India are relevant to the movement of free-ranging wild animals. The tiger is relevant for ecosystem services in the current context of climate change and acts as an indicator species to understand the status of a particular habitat.

TIGER CORRIDORS

CONSERVATION EFFORTS: SAVING THE FELINES

Landscapes and tiger corridors have been identified to conserve source population of tigers in long-term and to sustain genetic diversity. India's tiger conservation is largely tiger reserve and national park driven, where forests are delineated as inviolate areas free of human disturbances. However, for long-term conservation, government agencies, wildlife biologists, and conservationists are focussing equally on corridors. These corridors are key for source tiger populations to remain connected and to ensure genetic exchange through dispersal. Corridors also serve as an alternative habitat to protect from man-made and natural disasters.
(Source – Wildlife Institute of India and National Tiger Conservation Authority)



1 SHIVALIK HILLS AND GANGETIC PLAINS

Shivalik Hills and Gangetic Plain landscape comprises Uttarakhand, Uttar Pradesh, and Bihar. The landscape has four tiger reserves — Rajaji, Corbett, Dudhwa-Pilibhit, and Valmiki, with about 351 tigers.

CORRIDORS IN THIS LANDSCAPE

i) Rajaji-Corbett

ii) Corbett-Dudhwa

iii) Dudhwa-Kishanpur- Katarniaghat

2 CENTRAL INDIAN LANDSCAPE AND EASTERN GHATS

Central Indian ladscape encompassesa large landmass covering Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Odisha, parts of Rajasthan, Andhra Pradesh, and Telangana. The landscape is home to 23 tiger reserves and over 650 tigers.

CORRIDORS IN THIS LANDSCAPE

i) Ranthambore-Kuno Sanctuary-Shivpuri-Madhav National Park

ii) Bandhavgarh – Achanakmar

iii) Bandhavgarh- Sanjay Dubri - Guru Ghasidas

iv) Guru Ghasidas – Palamau – Lawalong

v) Kanha – Achanakmar

vi) Kanha – Pench

vii) Pench – Satpura – Melghat

vii) Kanha – Navegaon – Nagzira – Tadoba – Indravati

viii) Indravati – Udanti – Sitandi – Sunabeda

ix) Simlipal – Satkosia

x) Nagarjunsagar – Sri Venkateswara National Park

3 WESTERN GHATS

There are eleven tiger reserves in this landscape, 20 national parks and 68 wildlife sanctuaries forming one of the largest network of protected areas in India. This landscape holds a high density of tigers with over four tigers per 100 sq km, especially in the Nagarhole-Mudumalai–Wayanad source population, spanning Karnataka, Tamil Nadu, and Kerala

CORRIDORS IN THIS LANDSCAPE

i) Anshi – Dandeli – Sharavathi Valley

ii) Kudremukh National Park – Bhadra sanctuary

iii) Nagarhole – Bandipur – Mudumalai – Wayanad

iv) Nagarhole – Mudumulai – Wayanad

v) Parambikulam – Eravikulam – Indira Gandhi

vi) Kalakad – Mundanthurai – Periyar

4 NORTH–EAST LANDSCAPE

Tigers in this landscape historically share connecting gene pool with the South East Asian tiger population and represent an entry point of tigers into the Indian sub-continent. This landscape comprises seven tiger reserves and is noteworthy for high diversity, high levels of endemism and their vulnerability due to habitat loss.

CORRIDORS IN THIS LANDSCAPE

i) Kaziranga Tiger Reserve with other protected areas
Kaziranga – Itanagar wildlife sanctuary
Kaziranga – Karbi Anglong Hills
Kaziranga – Nameri corridor
Kaziranga – Orang corridor

ii) Manas – Buxa corridor

iii) Pakke – Nameri – Sonai – Rupai – Manas corridor

iv) Dibru Saikhowa – D'ering – Mehao corridor

v) Buxa – Jaldapara corridor

VEHICLE SCRAPPAGE POLICY

POLLUTION MANAGEMENT # RECYCLING

PRIMARY SOURCE | THE HINDU

While tabling the Union Budget for 2021-22, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman said the policy would help in encouraging fuel-efficient, environment-friendly vehicles, thereby reducing vehicular pollution and the oil import bill.

IN NEWS

WHAT IS VEHICLE SCRAPPAGE POLICY
After numerous delays, India may soon implement the policy for old vehicles
The What...
Old and polluting cars to be sent to scrapyards.
Owners of such vehicles to be compensated based on certain conditions.
The compensation amount may be equal or more to resale value of such vehicles.
The Why...
Taking old and polluting vehicles off roads can help the environment.
Many parts from old vehicles can be recycled. Parts that cannot be recycled need to be disposed off in an environmentally-safe manner.
Can create boost in demand for new vehicles.
...and The Concerns
Who will bear the cost of compensation?
Which vehicles would be eligible?
HTAuto.com infographic. Note: Details above are indicative only.

HERE IS A LOOK AT THE KEY TAKEAWAYS.

1. Under India's voluntary vehicle scrappage policy, private vehicles – which are over 20 years old – will have to undergo fitness tests. Commercial vehicles that are over 15 years old will also have to face these tests.
2. Fully automated fitness test facilities will be set up on a public-private partnership (PPP) basis involving private firms and state governments. The automated tests will allow no scope for human intervention or fudging of results.

3. Those who choose to drive a vehicle that has failed the automated test will face substantial penalties, and such vehicles could also be impounded.
4. Additionally, even vehicles older than 8 years that pass the automated tests will be subjected to a **'green tax',** which will see owners shell out an additional 10 percent to 25 percent of road tax at the time of the renewal of the vehicle's fitness certificate.
5. Those who opt for the voluntary scrappage scheme and have their old vehicle scrapped, will be eligible for benefits and incentives as part of the policy when they purchase a new vehicle.
6. The vehicle scrappage policy has been devised to promote sales of new vehicles with improved fuel efficiency and low pollution levels, as well as to slash India's Rs 10 lakh crore expenditure on crude imports.
7. Around 1 crore aging vehicles are set to be scrapped once the policy is implemented.
8. The new policy will boost the Indian automotive industry's turnover by 30 percent to Rs 10 lakh crore in the coming years.
9. As a direct result of the policy being put in place, up to 50,000 jobs and investments of around Rs 10,000 crore are expected to be generated.
10. India's automotive sector will be amongst those offering the highest employment opportunities in the country going forward.

GREEN TAX

POLLUTION MANAGEMENT

PRIMARY SOURCE | THE HINDU

IN NEWS

MoRTH or Ministry of Road Transport and Highways has announced approval of a 'green tax' on vehicles in order to dissuade people from using polluting vehicles.

IMPORTANT FEATURES OF THE MEASURE

- **10%-25% additional green tax** on the road tax payable by:-
  - Commercial transport vehicles **older than eight years** at the time of fitness certification renewal;
  - Personal vehicles **after 15 years.**
- **Lower green tax for public transport** vehicles such as buses.
- Higher **additional 50% of road tax is proposed for vehicles in highly polluted cities**, as well as differential tax based on fuel and vehicle type, such as diesel.
- **Vehicles of government departments and public sector units that are older than 15 years are to be deregistered and scrapped.**
- **Green tax funds** are to be kept in a separate account to help States measure pollution and tackle it.
- The policy is scheduled to come into force on **April 1, 2022.**
- The policy provides exemptions for
  - tractors, harvesters and tillers used in farms,
  - hybrid, electric, ethanol, liquefied petroleum gas (LPG) and compressed natural gas (CNG)-powered vehicles.

The announcement of green tax is a step towards the scrappage policy. The Ministry is of the view that the ecosystem is not in place for bringing in a proper policy at the moment. So, green tax initiative took this in phased manner starting with Government vehicles first.

But will pollution actually drop because of the Green Tax? According to NITI Aayog, some sections may not be in a position to retire old vehicles because of the high capital cost.

FACT: Vehicles that were manufactured before 2000 constitute less than 1 percent of total vehicles, but they emit 15 percent of the total pollution emitted from vehicles. These older vehicles pump out around 10 to 25 percent more pollutants than modern vehicles.

So, there is a financial aspect to this. Even a Green Tax is perhaps not enough motivation to get rid of an old, reliable vehicle. The extra financial burden on the owner is not going to make him happy, but paying it still looks better than buying a new vehicle.

It also depends on the type of owner.

- Car enthusiasts will pay the green tax and hold on to their vehicles.

- But rural owners, who use their old vehicles for their everyday business and jobs, cannot afford to buy new vehicles either – even with incentives that may be offered by the upcoming Scrappage Policy.

So, without sufficient incentive/penalty, and careful targeting of vehicles (with the knowledge of their condition), a tax penalty in name of Green tax will not serve the purpose. This is because

- the tax would be far lower than its resale value and earnings potential;
- there would be no compulsion to retire it. Continued operation of the vehicles would defeat the clean air objective and bring no cheer to the automobile industry.

OPTIONS AVAILABLE TO TWEAK(IMPROVE) THE POLICY

- For commercial transport vehicles, the Centre could offer a **green new deal** with financial options such as loans and grants to smaller operators to scrap their junk vehicles along with escalating the green tax annually to achieve the nudge effect.
- A second stimulus to bus companies could help green the fleet and cut pollution.
- Small operators such as autorickshaws could be offered low-interest loans, particularly to move to electric vehicles.

DICKINSONIA

EVOLUTION

PRIMARY SOURCE | THE HINDU

IN NEWS

Researchers have discovered three fossils of the earliest known living animal — the 550-million-year-old 'Dickinsonia' — on the roof of the Bhimbetka Rock Shelters, about 40 km from Bhopal.

WHAT IS DICKINSONIA?

- Dickinsonia is an extinct genus of basal animal that lived during the **late Ediacaran period** in what is now Australia, Russia and Ukraine.
- The individual Dickinsonia typically resembles a bilaterally symmetrical ribbed oval. Its affinities are presently unknown; its mode of growth is consistent with a stem-group bilaterian affinity, though some have suggested that it belongs to the fungi, or even an "extinct kingdom".
- The discovery of cholesterol molecules in fossils of Dickinsonia lends support to the idea that Dickinsonia was an animal.

ABOUT BHIMBETKA ROCK SHELTERS

- The Bhimbetka rock shelters are an archaeological site in central India that spans the prehistoric Paleolithic and Mesolithic periods, as well as the historic period.
- It exhibits the earliest traces of human life in India and evidence of Stone Age starting at the site in Acheulian times.
- It is located in the Raisen District in the Indian state of Madhya Pradesh about 45 kilometres (28 mi) south-east of Bhopal.
- It is a **UNESCO World Heritage Site** that consists of seven hills and over 750 rock shelters distributed over 10 km (6.2 mi).
- At least some of the shelters were inhabited more than 100,000 years ago.
- The rock shelters and caves provide evidence of, according to Encyclopædia Britannica, a "rare glimpse" into human settlement and cultural evolution from hunter-gatherers, to agriculture, and expressions of prehistoric spirituality.
- Some of the Bhimbetka rock shelters feature prehistoric cave paintings and the earliest are about 10,000 years old (c. 8,000 BCE), corresponding to the Indian Mesolithic.

- These cave paintings show themes such as animals, early evidence of dance and hunting. The Bhimbetka site has the oldest-known rock art in India, as well as is one of the largest prehistoric complexes.

WORLD SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT SUMMIT

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

PRIMARY SOURCE THE HINDU

IN NEWS

World Sustainable Development Summit 2021 was held recently. The theme of the Summit was 'Redefining our common future: Safe and secure environment for all'.

- The World Sustainable Development Summit (WSDS) is the annual flagship event of **The Energy and Resources Institute (TERI).** Instituted in 2001, the Summit series has marked 20 years in its journey of making 'sustainable development' a globally shared goal.
- Over the years, the Summit platform has brought together thought leaders, heads of state and government, scholars, corporates, youth groups, and civil society representatives from across the world. The Summit series has established itself as a responsible and an effective platform for **mobilizing opinion-makers to identify and advance pioneering actions** to address some of the most relevant issues concerning sustainable development.
- Perhaps the only Summit on global issues, taking place in the developing world, WSDS now strives to provide long-term solutions for the benefit of global communities by assembling the world's most enlightened leaders and thinkers on a single platform.
- The platform has reached out to the global community via exclusive features such as:- Plenary Sessions, Thematic Tracks, International and Regional Dialogues, Corporate Conclaves, and various exhibitions on clean and green technologies.

ARKA SHUBHA

BIODIVERSITY

PRIMARY SOURCE THE HINDU

ABOUT ARKA SHUBHA

- Indian Institute of Horticultural Research (IIHR) has developed a new variety of Marigold. It is mainly used in the pharmaceutical sector.
- All marigolds have a carotene content of up to 1.4%, the Arka Shubha variety of marigold has a carotene content of 2.8%, which is the highest content from a plant source.
- There is always a high demand for carotene in the pharma sector. Presently, India imports most of its carotene from China and other countries.
- The Arka Shubha variety is of use in the poultry sector as well. Its petals could be used as feed to get quality yolk.
- It is used as feed for sheep too.

WAYANAD WILDLIFE SANCTUARY

CONSERVATION

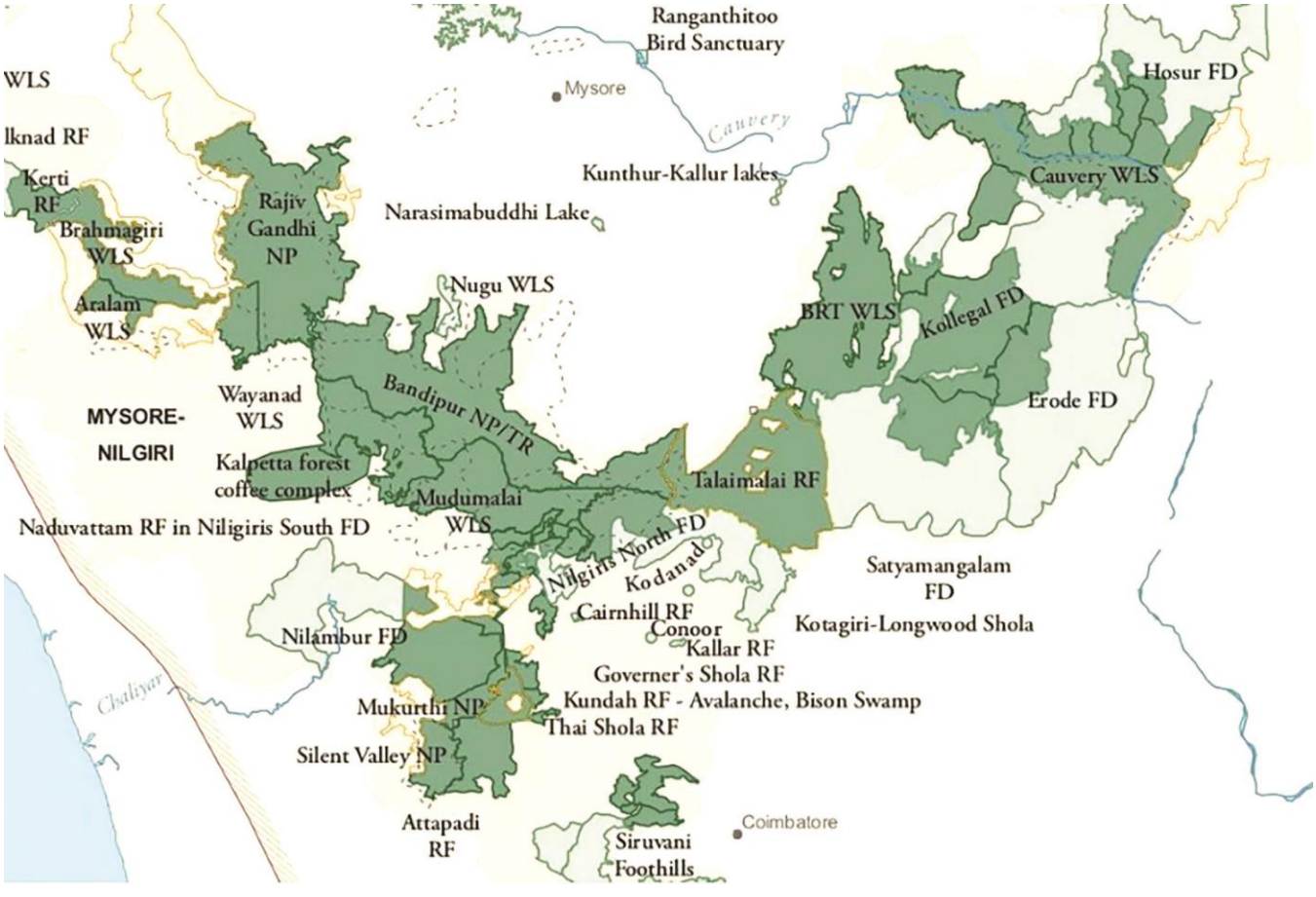
PRIMARY SOURCE THE HINDU SECONDARY SOURCE The Indian EXPRESS

IN NEWS

MoEFCC's draft notification on an eco-sensitive zone (ESZ) in Wayanad (north Kerala) which runs around the Wayanad Wildlife Sanctuary has triggered a fresh round of protest as people living in fringe areas of the forest say many human settlements will come under the zone.

- Wayanad wildlife sanctuary is contiguous to the protected areas of Nagarhole and Bandipur of Karnataka on the north-east and Mudumalai of Tamilnadu on the south –east.
- Rich in biodiversity, the sanctuary is an integral part of the Nilgiri Biosphere Reserve.
- The wildlife sanctuary comes under Protect Elephant.

- It has largest number of tigers in Kerala – still has no tiger reserve.
  - Human-animal conflicts in the region alongside reported instances of tigers lifting cattle and straying into human habitations. Reserve provides an effective way for tiger conservation and mitigating the human-animal conflicts in the region.
- The Centre has notified an area of up to 3.4 km around the boundaries of Wayanad Wildlife Sanctuary (WWS) as eco-sensitive zone.
- As per the draft notification issued by ministry of environment, forest and climate change (MoEFCC), 118.5 sq km has been earmarked as eco-sensitive zone (ESZ), of which 99.5 sq km is outside the sanctuary. The remaining 19 sq km comprises revenue villages within the sanctuary.



- It will help curtail human incursions into wildlife habitat and lessen man-animal conflict.

PROTESTOR'S CONCERN

- Notification if approved at least 30 per cent of Wayanad's total area will come under the ESZ. Where will people go? Thousands of people will be displaced.
- ESZ brings in restrictions on several human activities in ESZ, including
  - Ban on all new and existing mining;
  - Stone quarrying and crushing units;
  - New industries causing pollution;
  - Establishment of major hydroelectric project;
  - Setting up of new saw mills, brick kilns;
  - Commercial use of fire wood within ESZ;
  - No new commercial hotels, resorts or of any kind shall be permitted within 1km of the boundary of the protected area or up to the extent of ESZ, whichever is nearer.
- The notification imposes curbs of vehicular traffic.

- The draft notification also bars felling of trees in private lands without prior permission of the competent authority in the state government.
- The notification requires the state government to prepare a zonal master plan within two years in consultation with local residents to regulate development in ESZ and adhere to prohibited and regulated activities listed in the notification.
- **Impact** - It would cripple both agriculture and business sectors.

PRACTICE QUESTIONS

MCQS

Q1. Consider the following statements regarding "Air Quality Index":

1. The observations are taken at about 3 m height from the ground.
2. It transforms complex air quality data of various pollutants into a single number (index value), nomenclature and colour

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

(a) 1 only
(b) 2 only
(c) Both 1 and 2
(d) None of the Above

Q2. Dickinsonia has been in news recently. Which of the following best describes it?

(a) It is an extinct genus of basal animal that lived during the late Ediacaran period.
(b) It is an era in the Jurassic age.
(c) It is the Northern part of the Gondwanaland which is now Eastern Europe
(d) None of the Above

Q3. Consider the following statements about Vembanad Lake:

1. It is the longest lake in India.
2. It is a designated Ramsar site.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

(a) 1 only
(b) 2 only
(c) Both 1 and 2
(d) None of the Above

Q4. Consider the following statements regarding "Wayanad Wildlife Sanctuary":

1. It is contiguous to the protected areas of Nagarhole and Bandipur of Karnataka on the north-east and Mudumalai of Tamilnadu on the south –east.
2. The wildlife sanctuary comes under Protect Elephant.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

(a) 1 only
(b) 2 only
(c) Both 1 and 2
(d) None of the Above

Q5. Consider the following statements:

1. The Island Development Agency (IDA) was established for the holistic development of the islands, focusing on community-based tourism.
2. It is chaired by Union Minister for Tourism.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

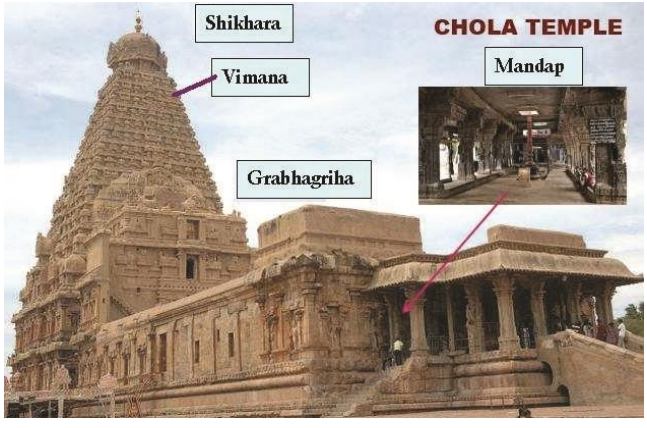
(a) 1 only (b) 2 only
(c) Both 1 and 2 (d) None of the Above

Answers: *1-c, 2-a, 3-c, 4-c, 5-a*

CHOLA ARCHITECTURE

#ART & CULTURE # ARCHITECTURE

- The Chola dynasty was one of the longest-ruling dynasties with earliest datable references are in inscriptions from the **3rd century BCE** left by Ashoka, of the Maurya Empire.
- The **greatest achievements** of the Kings of Chola Empire were in the **field of Art and Architecture**.
- Among those, the **Temple architecture** in the south India attained its climax under the Cholas.



- The Chola architecture is called **Dravida style**, because it was confined largely to south India.
- The Cholas built many **Siva temples** along the banks of the **River Kaveri**.
- **Built in 1009**, during the time of **King Rajaraja**, the beautiful **Siva temple of Thanjavur** is the largest and tallest of all Indian temples of its time.
- The Great living Chola temples that have been proclaimed as **World Heritage Sites by the UNESCO** are **Brihadisvara Temple**, the **temple of Gangaikondacholisvaram** and the **Airavatesvara Temple** at Darasuram. The Cholas sculpted many **bronze figures** of **Lord Shiva, Lord Vishnu** and **Goddess Lakshmi**

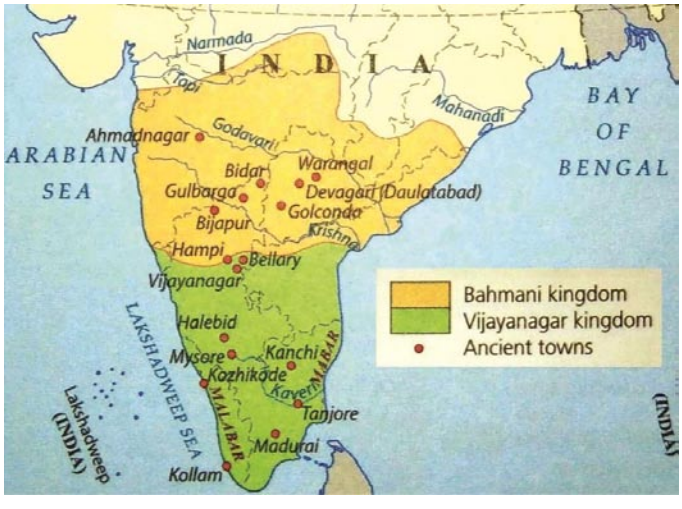
MAIN FEATURES OF THE CHOLA TEMPLES

Storeys	The main feature of this Chola architecture was the building of **storey upon storey** above the **chief deity-room (garbhagriha).**
Mandap	A pillared hall called mandap, with elaborately carved pillars and a flat roof, was generally placed in front of the sanctum. It acted as an audience hall and was a place for various other activities such as ceremonial dances which were performed by the devadasis- the women dedicated to the service of the gods.
Boundary and Entrance	Dravidian temples were surrounded by **high boundary walls**. The front wall had a high entrance gateway known as the **gopuram**.
Crown	The crowning element at the top of the temple was shaped in the form of an octagonal cupola (similar to a small stupika), is known as **shikhara**
Tower	The shape of the main temple tower is known as **vimana**. It is like a stepped pyramid that rises up geometrically rather than the curving shikhara of north India.
Images of King and Queens	The Brihadiswara temple is also called the **Rajaraja temple** because the Cholas were in the habit of installing images of kings and queens in the temples, in addition to

	the deity.
Image of Animals	The base of the walls of Chola temples are decorated with lines of mythical animals called **yazhi.**
Water tank	The presence of a **water tank inside the temple enclosure** was a **unique feature of the Dravidian style**. For example, **Brihadeswara temple at Tanjore** *(built by Raja Raja I)*, and **Gangaikondacholapuram temple** *(built by Rajendra I to commemorate his victory in the Gangetic delta)*, etc.
Land grants	The temples generally enjoyed revenue-free grants of lands for their expenses. They also received grants and rich donations from the wealthy merchants.
Economic impact	Some of the temples became so rich that they entered business, lent money, and took part in business enterprises. They also spent money on improving cultivation, digging wells, tanks etc., and providing irrigation channels so that agriculture expanded

VIJAYANAGAR EMPIRE

#MEDIEVAL INDIA



SOURCES

- **Srirangam Copper plates of Devaraya II** provide the genealogy and achievements of Vijaynagara Empire.
- **Nicolo Conti**, Venetian traveler visited the court of **Devaraya 1** and gave an account of Vijaynagara Empire.
- **Abdur Razzaq** came as an **emissary** to Vijayanagar (**Devaraya II)** sent by Shah Rukh of Persia. He described the wealth and life of Vijaynagara Empire.
- **Domingo Paes and Barbosa**, Portuguese travelers visited the court of **Krishnadevaraya** of Vijayanagar.

POLITICAL HISTORY

- Sangama, Saluva, Tuluva and Aravidu ruled Vijayanagar from A.D. 1336 TO 1672.
- It was founded in **1336 by Harihara and Bukka** of the **Sangama** dynasty who originally served under the **Kakatiya rulers of Warangal**.
- They later proclaimed their independence and founded a new city on the south bank of the **Tungabhadra River** named it Vijayanagar. Important rulers of this dynasty were Devaraya I and Devaraya II.
- There was constant conflict between Vijayanagar Empire and Bahamini kingdom over **Raichur doab** which was a fertile region between **Krishna and Tungabhadra River** and also over the fertile areas of Krishna-Godavari delta.
- The Saluva dynasty was founded by **Saluva Narasimha** and reined only for a brief period.
- The **Tuluva** Dynasty was founded by **Vira Narasimha**. Its greatest ruler was **Krishnadevaraya**. He was also known as **Andhra Bhoja**. He had eight eminent scholars **Ashtadiggajas** at his royal court.

ADMINISTRATION

- The Empire was divided into different administrative units called **Mandalams, Nadus, Sthalas** and finally into **gramas**. The governor of Mandalam was called **Mandaleshwar or Nayak**.
- Besides land revenue, tributes and gifts from vassals and feudal chiefs, customs collected at ports, taxes on various professions were other sources of income to the government.

- The army consisted of cavalry, infantry, artillery and elephants. The top grade officers of the army were known as **Nayaks or Poligars**. They were granted land in lieu of their services which were called **amaram**.

SOCIO-ECONOMIC CONDITIONS

- The Sangama rulers were chiefly **Saivaites** and **Virupaksha** was their family deity.
- Krishnadevaraya dug an enormous tank which was also used for irrigation purpose.
- Diamond mines were located in Kurnool and Anantpur district (Andhra Pradesh).
- The chief gold coin was the **varaha** and chief item of exports were cotton, silk, spices, rice, saltpeter and sugar. The imports consisted of horses, pearls, copper, coral etc.
- The art of **shipbuilding** had developed.

Cultural Contributions

- The most important temples of Vijayanagar style are found in Hampi ruins. Vittalaswamy and Hazra Ramaswamy temples are best examples of this style.
- The peak of literary achievement was reached under Krishnadevaraya who himself was a Sanskrit and Telgu scholar. His famous court poet, **Allasani Peddana wrote Manucharitam**.

OTHER FACTS

- **Tenali Rama** was one of the Ashtadiggajas at the court of Krishnadevaraya.
- '**Panduranga Matatmyamu**' was a poem written by him (Tenali Rama) and it was regarded as one of the great literary beauty.
- Krishnadevaraya built a new city called **Nagalapuram** in memory of his **queen Nagaladevi.**
- His work in **Telugu** entitled **Amuktamalyada** deals with several matters including **the art of government**.
- **Barbosa pays a tribute to him for the Justice and equity prevailing in his empire.**
- During the reign of **Rama Raya**, the combined forces of **Bijapur, Ahmadnagar, Golkonda and Bidar** defeated him at the **Battle of Talaikotta (or** the battle of Rakshasa Tangadi**) in 1565** which marked an end of the Vijayanagar Empire. The last ruler of Vijayanagar Empire was **Sri Ranga III.**

CHARMINAR

#ART & CULTURE

IN NEWS

Responding to an RTI, the ASI made it clear that the Bhagyalakshmi Temple came into existence after taking over of Hyderabad by the Govt. of India adjacent to South Eastern minaret of the Charminar.

CHARMINAR

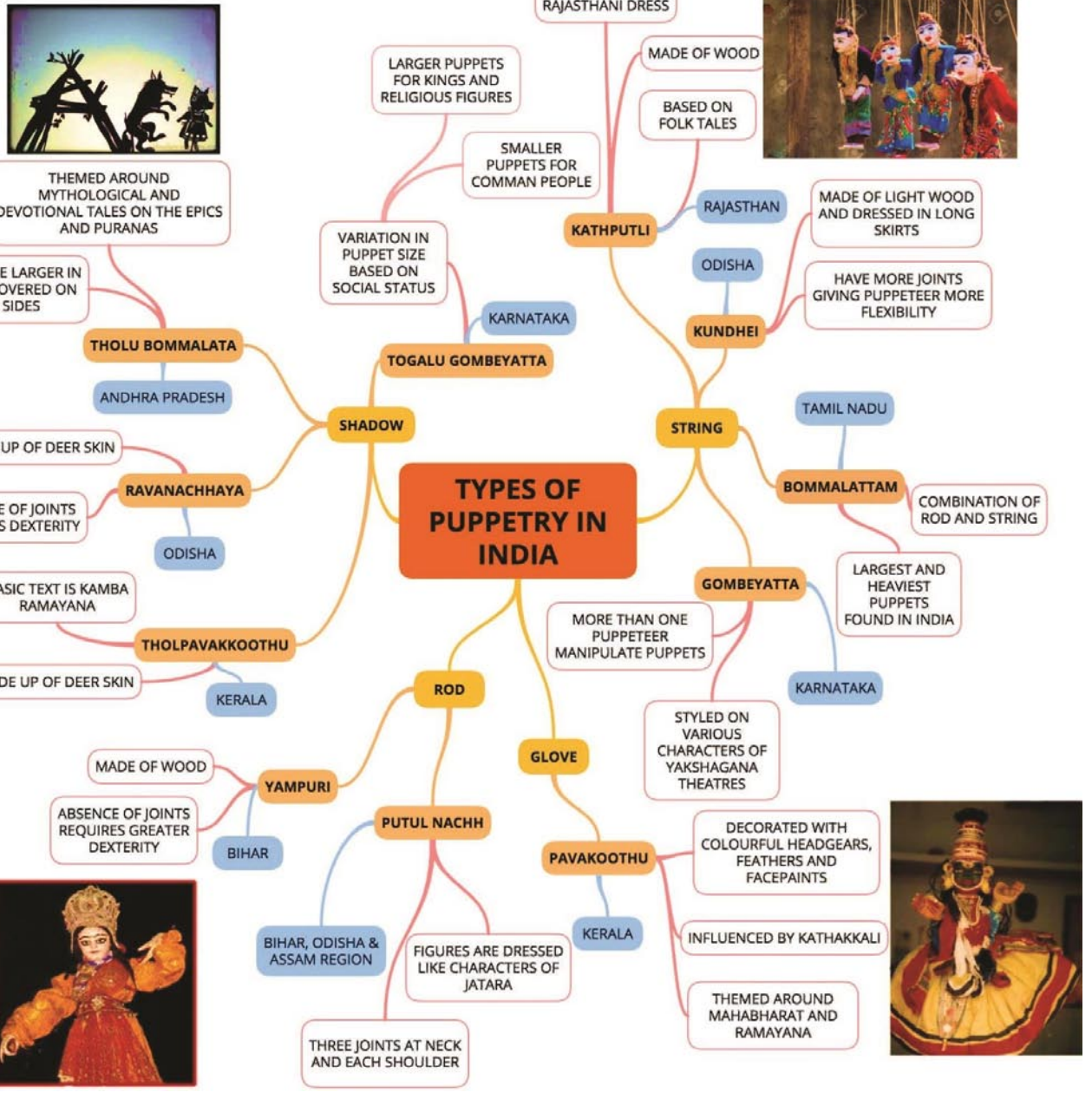
- Built in the year **1591 AD**.
- The landmark of the Hyderabad city was built by the fifth ruler of **Qutb Shahi dynasty, Muhammad Quli Qutb Shah**.
- Charminar, a monument and mosque, is an imposing model that celebrates the influence of the **Muslim Turkomans** in India.
- Charminar is a square-shaped structure built out of granite and lime mortar. The monument predominantly has an **Islamic-style design, but influences of Hindu architecture can also be seen** in its ornamentation.
- It is flanked by four minarets on every corner which are 48.7 meters high. It is believed that the four minarets are symbolic of Islam's first four Khalifas. Each minaret is four stories tall, and the floors are divided by beautifully carved rings around it.
- The mosque is located on the top floor.
- The reason behind building it remains unclear, though it is widely accepted that the Charminar was built to

commemorate the eradication of the plague which was widespread during that period in the city.

- According to **Jean de Thévenot**, a French traveler of the 17th century whose narration was complemented with the available Persian texts, the construction was done to celebrate the beginning of the second Islamic millennium year.

PUPPETARY IN INDIA

#ART & CULTURE



THOLPAVAKKOOTHU

#ART AND CULTURE

IN NEWS

Leather puppets in the traditional Tholpavakkoothu are being animated by robots. Tholpavakkoothu is an art of shadow puppetry.

Shadow puppets are flat figures, cut out of leather and treated to make it translucent. The figures are painted identically on both sides of the leather. They are pressed against the screen with a strong source of light behind it. Shadow puppets tradition survives in Orissa, Kerala, Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Maharashtra and Tamil Nadu.

THOLPAVAKKOOTHU

- **Tholpavakkoothu** is the unique shadow puppet form of Kerala, South India.
- It evolved from **Koonathara village** near Shoranur (Kerala).
- In this puppetry form, **Kamba Ramayana** is used as its basic text.
- **Kamba Ramayanam**, is a Tamil epic that was written by the Tamil poet – Kamban, during the 12th century.
- It is also known as **Ramavataram**.
- Performers of the shadow puppetry form **Tholpavakkoothu** are now spreading the egalitarian concept of Onam.
- In this concept, they are making **Asura king Mahabali** the central character of their latest series of performances.
- **It is only a deviation from their age-old practice of adapting it only from Kamba Ramayana.**
- It is preserved as a family tradition by the **Pulavars.**
- **K.K. Ramachandra Pulavar** is a famous puppeteer of this puppetry form.

PRACTICE QUESTIONS

MCQS

Q1. Consider the following statements:

1. Tholpavakkoothu is the shadow puppet form of Kerala.
2. Kamba Ramayanam is a Telugu epic.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

(a) 1 only (b) 2 only
(c) Both 1 and 2 (d) Neither 1 nor 2

Q2. Consider the following statements:

1. The main feature of Chola architecture was the building of storey above the chief deity-room.
2. The Brihadiswara temple is also called the Rajaraja temple.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

(a) 1 only (b) 2 only
(c) Both 1 and 2 (d) Neither 1 nor 2

Q3. Which of the following statements is/are correct?

1. The Charminar was built by Ahmed Shahi dynasty.
2. The Charminar has influence of the Muslim Turkomans in India.

Select the correct answer using the code given below:

(a) 1 only (b) 2 only

(c) Both 1 and 2 (d) Neither 1 nor 2

Q4. Consider the following statements:

1. Tenali Rama was one of the Ashtadiggajas at the court of Krishnadevaraya.
2. 'Panduranga Matatmyamu' was a poem written by Tenali Rama.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

(a) 1 only (b) 2 only

(c) Both 1 and 2 (d) Neither 1 nor 2

Q5. Consider the following statements:

1. The last ruler of Vijayanagar Empire was Sri Ranga III.
2. Abdur Razzaq came as an emissary to Vijayanagar during the reign of Rama Raya.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

(a) 1 only (b) 2 only

(c) Both 1 and 2 (d) Neither 1 nor 2

Answers: *1-a, 2-c, 3-b, 4-c, 5-a*

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SECURITY

GS PAPER III (MAIN)

SEDITION

#SEDITION #FREE SPEECH #SECURITY

PRIMARY SOURCE THE HINDU SECONDARY SOURCE The Indian EXPRESS

IN NEWS

Recent charges of sedition against individuals have brought back focus to a law introduced in the Indian Penal Code in 1870. In Kedar Nath Singh v. State of Bihar (1962), the Supreme Court upheld the constitutional validity of sedition and noted it as being a reasonable restriction on free speech as provided in Article 19(2) of the Constitution. It made clear that a citizen has the right to say or write whatever she likes about the government, or its measures, by way of criticism or comments, as long as she does not incite people to violence against the government established by law or with the intention of creating public disorder. So, the question remains as to why sedition is used by the government as a coercive law to invoke fear in the minds of citizens of India.

SEDITION & FREE SPEECH WORKS AT OPPOSITE ENDS

- **Sedition and Free Speech operates at two ends of the spectrum** but sedition can cross the path of free speech once in a while. Once, threshold of the reasonable restrictions is crossed by an individual, he/she enters into the unknown domain or territory of sedition.
- **This world of sedition is very mostly much one sided** as the government holds most of the strings of one's life and personal liberty. So, it is important to know the grey areas where the world of sedition begins and more often than not, it begins with the idea of freedom of speech and expression which is also one of the fundamental right under Article 19(1)(a).
- **Free speech is one of the most significant principles of democracy -** The purpose of this freedom is to allow an individual to attain self-fulfilment, assist in discovery of truth, strengthen the capacity of a person to take decisions and facilitate a balance between stability and social change. The freedom of speech and expression is the first and foremost human right, the first condition of liberty as it makes the life meaningful. This freedom is termed as an essence of free society.

IMPORTANCE OF FREE SPEECH

- **The Universal Declaration of Human Rights, 1948**, in its Preamble and Article 19 declared freedom of speech as a basic fundamental right.
- **John Stuart Mill** advocated for the free flow of the ideas and expressions in a society. He argued that for the stability of a society one must not suppress the voice of the citizens, how so ever contrary it might be. To reach a point of conclusion and that too a right conclusion, in certain cases, open public discussions and debates are inevitable.
- According to Mill, this could be achieved through the right to freedom of speech. The right not only makes it possible to highlight the popular opinion of a society but also provides a platform to the suppressed and unheard people who wish to voice against any celebrated culture.
- Mill further points out that a good government is the one where the intelligence of the people is promoted.

RESTRICTIONS OF FREE SPEECH

- **Article 19(1)(a)** of the Constitution of India guarantees freedom of speech and expression to all citizens.
- **However, this freedom is subjected to certain restrictions** under Article 19(2) namely, *interests of the sovereignty and integrity of India, the security of the State, friendly relations with foreign States, public order, decency or morality or in relation to contempt of court, defamation or incitement to an offence.*
- **Sedition is used for restriction on free speech.**

Sedition as defined in Indian Penal Code under section 124A: *Whoever by words, either spoken or written, or by signs, or by visible representation, or otherwise, brings or attempts to bring into* ***hatred or contempt, or excites or attempts to excite disaffection towards the Government*** *established by law in, shall be punished with imprisonment for life, to which fine may be added, or with imprisonment which may extend to three years, to which fine may be added, or with fine.*

Explanations

- ✓ The expression "disaffection" includes disloyalty and all feelings of enmity.
- ✓ Comments expressing disapprobation of the measures of the Government with a view to obtain their alteration by lawful means, ***without exciting or attempting to excite hatred, contempt or disaffection***, do not constitute an offence under this section.
- ✓ Comments expressing disapprobation of the administrative or other action of the Government without exciting or attempting to excite hatred, contempt or disaffection, do not constitute an offence under this section.

History of Sedition

- Sedition laws were enacted in 17th century England, when lawmakers believed that only good opinions of the government should survive, as bad opinions were detrimental to the government and monarchy. This sentiment and law was borrowed and inserted into the IPC in 1870.
- **Section 113 of Macaulay's Draft Penal Code** corresponds to the present section 124A of IPC on sedition. The punishment proposed was life imprisonment. The offence of **sedition** is provided under **section 124A of the Indian Penal Code, 1860 (IPC).**
- The law was **first used to prosecute Bal Gangadhar Tilak in 1897**. That case led to Section 124A of the IPC being amended, to add the words "hatred" and "contempt" to "disaffection", which was defined to include disloyalty and feelings of enmity. Even Mahatma Gandhi was later tried for sedition for his articles in Young India.
- Even in Constituent Assembly, an attempt was made to incorporate sedition to restrict free speech which was opposed by Jawaharlal Nehru.

SUPREME COURT JUDGMENTS ON SEDITION

- **Romesh Thapar v State of Madras -** Supreme Court declared that unless the freedom of speech and expression threaten the security of or tend to overthrow the State, any law imposing restriction upon the same would not fall within the purview of Article 19(2) of the Constitution.
- **KedarNath Singh vs State of Bihar,1962 -** Constitution Bench had ruled in favour of the constitutional validity of Section 124A (sedition) in the IPC. The Court held that a person can be prosecuted for sedition only - ***if his acts caused "incitement to violence or intention or tendency to create public disorder or cause disturbance of public peace".***

  Unless an act of a person does not incite violence or disturb public order cannot be booked under the dangerous section of sedition.
- **Balwant Singh v State of Punjab**, **1995** - Supreme Court, in, acquitted persons from charges of sedition for shouting slogans such as "Khalistan Zindabaad" and "Raj Karega Khalsa" outside a cinema after Indira Gandhi's assassination.

  Instead of looking at the "tendency" of the words to cause public disorder, the Court held that ***mere sloganeering which evoked no public response did not amount to sedition, for which a more overt act was required.*** The accused did not intend to "incite people to create disorder" and no "law and order problem" actually occurred.

  The court has been categorical in expressing that ***every criticism does not amount to sedition and the real intent of the speech must be considered before imputing seditious intent to an act.***

  It was reasoned that raising of some lonesome slogans, a couple of times by two individuals, without anything more, did not constitute any threat to the Government of India as by law established nor could the same give rise to feelings of enmity or hatred among different communities or religious or other groups.
- **Shreya Singhal v. Union of India** - Section 66A of the Information and Technology Act, 2000, was declared unconstitutional on the ground ***that it was in direct conflict with the fundamental right of freedom of speech and expression.***

The Supreme Court held that under the Constitutional scheme, for the democracy to thrive, the liberty of speech and expression is a cardinal value and of paramount importance.

There are three concepts which are fundamental in understanding the reach of freedom of speech and expression. The first is **discussion**, the second is **advocacy**, and the third is **incitement**.

Mere discussion or even advocacy of a particular cause howsoever unpopular is at the heart of Article 19(1) (a). It is only when such discussion or advocacy reaches the level of incitement that Article 19(2) kicks in. It is at this stage that a law may be made curtailing the speech or expression that leads inexorably to or tends to cause public disorder or tends to cause or tends to affect the sovereignty & integrity of India, the security of the State, friendly relations with foreign States, etc.

The freedom of speech does not only help in the balance and stability of a democratic society, but also gives a sense of self-attainment. In the case of **Indian Express Newspaper (Bombay)(P) Ltd. v. Union of India**, following four important purposes of the free speech and expression were set out:

(i) it helps an individual to attain self-fulfillment;

(ii) it assists in the discovery of truth;

(iii) it strengthens the capacity of an individual in participating in decision-making; and

(iv) it provides a mechanism by which it would be possible to establish a reasonable balance between stability and social change.

- **S. P Gupta v. Union of India** - Supreme Court held that the right to know is inherent in the right to freedom of speech and expression under Article 19(1) (a).
- **Javed Habib v State of Delhi** - it was held that Holding an opinion against the Prime Minister or his actions or criticism of the actions of government or drawing inference from the speeches and actions of the leader of the government that the leader was against a particular community and was in league with certain other political leaders, cannot be considered as sedition under Section 124A of the IPC.

  The criticism of the government is the hallmark of democracy - The democratic system which necessarily involves an advocacy of the replacement of one government by another, gives the right to the people to criticize the government.

  Higher standards of proof needed for conviction under Sedition - This is necessary to protect fair and reasonable criticisms and dissenting opinions from unwarranted State suppression. Legitimate speech must be protected and care must be taken that the grounds of limitation are reasonable and just.

  Section 124A IPC must be read in consonance with Article 19(2) of the Constitution - and the reasonableness of the restriction must be carefully scrutinised on the basis of facts and circumstances of the case. On the other hand, there have also been instances where people have been charged with sedition for making statements that in no manner undermine the security of the nation.

Law Commission views on Sedition: The Law Commission of India was asked to consider section 124A of the Indian Penal Code, 1860 which deals with sedition. Sedition attracts imprisonment from three years to life. Accordingly, a study was undertaken to examine the various pros and cons of the provision on sedition and the Commission came up with Consultation Paper on sedition in August 2018. **Some of the important observations of Law Commission are:**

- **Dissent and criticism of the government are essential ingredients of a robust public debate in a vibrant democracy.** Thus, if the country is not open to positive criticism, there lies little difference between the pre- and post-Independence eras.
- **Right to criticise one's own history and the right to offend are rights protected under free speech under Article 19 of the Constitution**. While it is essential to protect national integrity, it should not be misused as a tool to curb free speech.
- **Every restriction on free speech and expression must be carefully scrutinised** to avoid unwarranted restrictions.
- In a democracy, singing from the same songbook is not a benchmark of patriotism. **People should be at liberty to show their affection towards their country** in their own way.
- **An expression of frustration over the state of affairs cannot be treated as sedition**. For merely expressing a thought which is not in consonance with

the policy of the government of the day, a person should not be charged under the provision of sedition.

- The Commission also asked whether it would be worthwhile to rename **Section 124A and find a suitable substitute for the term – sedition**

- **Arguments in favour of Sedition**
  - Not Really a draconian law
  - Used only in specific circumstances
  - Application of sedition is a part of reasonable restriction.
  - Does not curb freedom of speech until it incites violence
  - Used against anti-national elements or actors such as naxals, terrorists etc.
  - Mere misuse of sedition law by one government cannot be grounds for repeal of the law.
- **Arguments against Sedition**
  - Against democratic norms
  - Grossly misused by state machinery to quell dissent
  - Used against writers, journalists, students who raise voice against policies of government.
  - Draconian in nature
  - It is used to gag press and freedom of speech and expression.

Conclusion

- There is a need to differentiate between strong criticism of the government and incitement of violence. Mere criticism of the government or its policies should not amount to sedition.
- Such a dissent or criticism must be accompanied by incitement to violence or intention or tendency to create public disorder or cause disturbance of public peace which is against the interests of sovereignty and integrity of India or security of the state - for invoking charges under sedition.
- Sedition should not be used by the government against such people voicing their opinion even against the functioning of the government.
- Government must either repeal sedition or introduce amendments to fix specific criterias for use of sedition against any citizen or organisation.

GOVERNMENT'S NOTICE TO TWITTER

#SOCIAL MEDIA #SECURITY

PRIMARY SOURCE THE HINDU | SECONDARY SOURCE The Indian EXPRESS

IN NEWS

The Government sent notice to Twitter after it reinstated several handles which the government had asked it to ban pertaining to farmers' protest. Twitter responded by saying that it cannot ban people's freedom of speech and expression. Twitter has argued that it blocked many accounts on the government's request but refused to block several others that were consistent with the company's free speech policies, though intensely critical of the government's handling of the farmers' protests. The spat between government and Twitter marks a new development and a showdown seems inevitable now as the Government has threatened Twitter with penal action for not complying with its orders. The Government has also released its guidelines to regulate social media platforms. Here, let us understand about Section 69A and Section 66A of Information Technology Act.

GOVT. ORDERS TWITTER TO ROLL BACK TWEETS

- The issue pertains to tweets put out by some handles on the ongoing farmer protests as also a hashtag that suggested that a farmer genocide was being planned.
- **The Ministry of Electronics and IT ordered these handles (257 URLs and one hashtag) to be blocked** on the grounds that they were spreading dangerous misinformation about the protests. Twitter initially complied with the order but then restored these tweets and handles, which included those of media houses.
- **The Government's initial order was issued under *Section 69A of the Information Technology Act, 2000,*** under which it can direct an **intermediary** to block any information for public access *"in the interest of sovereignty and integrity of India, defence of India, security of the State, friendly relations with foreign States or public order or for preventing incitement to the commission of any cognizable offence relating to above…".*

- This is the same Section under which hundreds of Chinese apps have been banned in recent months.

The term "Intermediaries" has been defined in Section 2 (w) of The Information Technology Act, 2000 *- Intermediary, with respect to any particular electronic records, means any person who on behalf of another person receives, stores or transmits that record or provides any service with respect to that record and includes telecom service providers, network service providers, internet service providers, web-hosting service providers, search engines, online payment sites, online-auction sites, online-market places and cyber cafes.*

Section 69A of IT Act: If the Central Government or any of its officers are satisfied that it is necessary in the interest of – sovereignty and integrity of India, defence of India, security of the State, friendly relations with foreign States or public order or for preventing incitement to the commission of any cognizable offence relating to above – then it can by order, direct any agency of the Government or intermediary to block for access by the public any information generated, transmitted, received, stored or hosted in any computer resource.

Shreya Singhal Judgment upheld Section 69A of IT Act: Though the use of Section 69A has been often criticised for the secrecy surrounding the process, it was upheld by the Supreme Court in the landmark ***Shreya Singhal vs Union of India (2015) Judgment***. The Court then was satisfied with the safeguards available.

Why Section 66 of IT Act was declared unconstitutional in Shreya Singhal Judgment?

- Section 66A of the Information and Technology Act, 2000, was declared unconstitutional on the ground ***that it was in direct conflict with the fundamental right of freedom of speech and expression.***
- The Supreme Court held that under the Constitutional scheme, for the democracy to thrive, **the liberty of speech and expression is a cardinal value and of paramount importance.**
- There are three concepts which are fundamental in understanding the reach of freedom of speech and expression. The first is **discussion**, the second is **advocacy**, and the third is **incitement**.
- Mere discussion or even advocacy of a particular cause howsoever unpopular is at the heart of Article 19(1) (a). It is only when such discussion or advocacy reaches the level of incitement that Article 19(2) kicks in. It is at this stage that a law may be made curtailing the speech or expression that leads inexorably to or tends to cause public disorder or tends to cause or tends to affect the sovereignty & integrity of India, the security of the State, friendly relations with foreign States, etc.
- **Section 66A did not fall within any Reasonable Restrictions in the exercise of Freedom of Expression -** The Supreme Court of India invalidated Section 66A of the Information Technology Act of 2000 in its entirety. The Court held that the prohibition against the dissemination of information by means of a computer resource or a communication device intended to cause annoyance, inconvenience or insult did not fall within any reasonable exceptions to the exercise of the right to freedom of expression.
- **Section 66A is capable of limiting all forms of internet communications** as it makes no distinction between mere discussion or advocacy of a particular point of view.
- **No clear Relation to Protect Public Order under Section 66A -** The Court further held that the law fails to establish a clear proximate relation to the protection of public order.
- **Section 66A did not distinguish between dissemination of information to one person or mass dissemination -** According to the Court, the commission of an offense under Section 66A was complete by sending a message for the purpose of causing annoyance or insult. As a result, the law does not make distinction between mass dissemination and dissemination to only one person without requiring the message to have a clear tendency of disrupting public order.

PART TWO

ETHICS, INTEGRITY & APTITUDE

Coverage from varied sources

INDIVIDUAL AND COLLECTIVE CONSCIENCE

#ETHICS #INTEGRITY #APTITUDE

WHAT IS CONSCIENCE?

a person's moral sense of right and wrong, viewed as acting as a guide to one's behaviour.

Conscience describes two things – **what a person believes is right** and **how a person decides what is right**. More than just 'gut instinct', our conscience is a 'moral muscle'. By informing us of our values and principles, it becomes the standard we use to judge whether or not our actions are ethical. We can call these two roles ethical awareness and ethical decision making.

Ethical Awareness: This is our ability to **recognise ethical values and principles**. The medieval philosopher **Thomas Aquinas** believed our conscience emerged from synderesis [sin-dee-ree-sis] – the 'spark of conscience'. He literally meant the human mind's ability to understand the world in moral terms. Conscience was the process by which a person brought the principles of synderesis into a practical situation through our decisions.

Ethical Decision Making: This is our ability to make practical decision in light of ethical values and principles. In his writings, Aristotle described phronesis [fro-nee-sis] – the goodness of practical reason. This was the ability to evaluate a situation clearly so we would know how to act virtuously under the circumstances.

A conscience which is both **well-formed (shaped by education and experience) and well informed (aware of facts, evidence and so on)** enables us to know ourselves and our world and act accordingly. Seeing conscience in this way is important because it teaches us ethics is not innate. By continuously working to understand our surroundings, we strengthen our moral muscle.

On the basis of above, given below are some of the stories and experiences shared by people highlighting the importance of conscience in day to day life.

PRIMARY SOURCE THE HINDU

►THE MAGIC OF MISTAKES

(# lesson on conscience)

Everyone commits blunders, but the wise learn from them

A life spent making mistakes is more honourable and useful than a life doing nothing – George Bernard Shaw

Have you ever learnt from a mistake you have made? Many won't admit doing so. For those who do, there is no need for guilt. We often make mistakes from taking risks, but some brush them aside and learn from it. With that, they may not make mistakes the next time around.

When entrepreneurs spend time and money trying to avoid failure, the lessons learnt from missteps can be invaluable, making them wiser and ultimately earning them more profit.

While we know the importance of learning from mistakes, the reality is not as easy as it sounds — despite the best efforts, our brains fight us every step of the way by making us rationalise that it was not a big mistake to start with.

Everyone makes mistakes, but the wise learn from them. **Experience is the name of our mistakes and the resulting pain nourishes courage.** The **hidden magic in every mistake is the learning.** To learn from

mistakes, we have to first acknowledge that we have made one, but that makes us feel bad about ourselves. To avoid it, we often skirt around the truth, which is a big obstacle and arguably the most important one to overcome.

The magic of mistakes: We often retroactively create positive attributes to a choice we have already made, which is a choice supportive bias and an example of a rationalisation-after- the-event.

Effects of making mistakes are not limited to the psychological level either. When we celebrate after a win, there is a rush of "feel-good" chemicals such as testosterone and dopamine from the brain, giving us a high. With repetition, this neurotransmitter signal morphs the brain's chemical configuration to make the better-trained people feel smarter and more confident.

The dictum "success begets success" makes future winnings more likely and neuroscientists call it the "winner effect", which along with the not-yet-officially-named "loser effect" runs in accordance with Nietzsche's famous adage "That which does not kill us makes us stronger."

The 18th century polymath Benjamin Franklin was being more intuitive than rigorously scientific when he famously defined insanity (as echoed by Einstein) as **"doing the same thing over and over expecting a different result".** Such persisting attitudes are not a foible because the consequences can be severe.

Neurosciences suggest that the inability to learn from mistakes may lie at the heart of problems such as passive aggression, substance abuse and certain types of personality disorders. The changes in EEG patterns in some cases suggest that the flaws may be hard-wired in the brain.

Since science is about measurable and repeatable phenomena, every failed experiment is a learning experience. Failures being more plentiful than successes, **mistakes are to be celebrated because of their immense tutorial value.**

Ian Wilmut had hundreds of failures before succeeding with cloning Dolly the sheep.

►ADOPT CLEANLINESS

(# lesson on conscience)

A culture of cleanliness and tidiness must be inculcated from an early age

Those who have travelled overseas are struck by the orderliness and cleanliness of public places in sharp contrast to what is happening back home. No one tells a child to keep the surroundings clean and not to litter. It is the way a child is brought up that inspires a desire for cleanliness.

That is the reason it is difficult to find even a scrap of paper or plastics on the streets or outside homes in many foreign countries. That applies to cleanliness on board trains, buses and trams that are in public service. No one throws anything outside a running train or bus as it is considered taboo.

We adopt a dual standard. We tend to keep our house and neighbourhood clean, but have no compunction in throwing dirt and discarded objects outside. The logic is someone is there to clean up and pick up the discard. People in general hold rivers in respect but do not hesitate to throw things in the river. That is the reason our rivers, lakes and other waterbodies are far from clean. Even the piped treated water that is supplied by municipal authorities is not fit for drinking. Most homes have some sort of filter to clean the water before use. Others may boil the water before use. In sharp contrast, a few cities round the globe claim proudly that their city water supply is fit for drinking straight from the tap.

I was away in a remote part of Japan waiting for a connecting train at a small wayside station. A young girl was also waiting for the train. I watched her taking out a candy from her bag and eat it. Afterwards, she walked briskly to a nearby waste bin provided on the platform to deposit the wrapper. Such is the level of awareness to keep surroundings clean from a young age. It is the culture of cleanliness and tidiness which is inculcated from an early age. It is not that our youngsters are not aware of the need to keep surroundings clean. But for most others, it is sheer apathy and carelessness that makes them litter.

When a toilet is not available, what does a person do? He uses any public place to ease himself. I observed a

person soiling a wall. I asked his companion why he was doing so. "Maybe, he couldn't have waited till he found a toilet," replied his friend. That person after finishing his business came near me, "Sir, you are right. But I couldn't help it. Please provide a toilet nearby." I kept quiet as I had no answer.

A few public toilets are maintained badly with poor cleanliness. These go out of water soon leaving a stinking mess. No wonder only a few persons patronise public toilets. However, 'pay and use' toilets maintained by attenders are better. While I was on a tour of Paris, I found a men's toilet was cleaned by a woman who used to dart in and out when there was no person inside. She was also in charge of the women's toilet. "Unisex" toilets are still not popular.

The Swachh Bharat programme was launched throughout the country with big fanfare. After five years, many toilets were built in villages and towns. Some of them were substandard that kept patrons away. Unfortunately, open defecation, especially in villages, is still going on. A similar sad story applies to the programme to clean the major rivers like Ganga and Yamuna. Thousands of crores of money are already spent with poor results. The major issue remains leakage of sewage water into the rivers. The priority should have been first to build treatment plants and then lead the clean water into the river. Such simple priorities are being overlooked in the enthusiasm to achieve something big. It has become more of publicity rather than actual work.

It is becoming clear that the cleanliness drive has to start with the people. The government and other agencies should act as facilitators to help plan and execute the work. Consultation with the people concerned goes a long way in the success of any cleanliness drive. A cleanliness plan should be community based rather than as a diktat from the government. **"Start early in life," is a good piece of advice for creating awareness of cleanliness**. It is the duty and responsibility of every citizen to take care of cleanliness.

► LIES VERSUS THE TRUTH, THE CHOICE IS OURS

(# lesson on conscience)

Admitting and learning from mistakes should be the right way to go, and Indians need to learn that

A few months ago, I visited a museum of history in Berlin called the Topography of Terror. The exhibits in this indoors-and-outdoors museum portray heinous crimes committed by the Nazis. Here, the thought that came to me was of tolerance and conflicts of interest. Topography of Terror is funded and managed by the German government — proof that Germans are fine with self-reflection and criticism.

In many leading democracies, such introspection and criticism are tolerated. Consider the recent Boeing 737 MAX aircraft crashes. It was the U.S. media — including The New York Times, The Washington Post and USA Today — that were in the forefront of debates on certain technical flaws in the software used in the aircraft that could have led to the accidents. An article in The New York Times even said it was Boeing's relentless competition with its European rival Airbus for orders from America's own airlines that led to security lapses. American airlines were considering placing orders for hundreds of jet aircraft with Boeing's European rival Airbus, which forced Boeing into a frenzied rush, and in record time it developed and deployed the 737 MAX 8, even overlooking certain key safety features. Americans, like Germans, aren't afraid of such self-criticism.

Can I even imagine a museum in Delhi portraying some of the mistakes Indians have committed, in line with Topography of Terror? A museum on sati, the caste system, honour killings, mob lynching and so on? Tolerance for criticism and dissent vary substantially across time and space. Our own level of tolerance, while far below that of the majority of developed countries, is still higher than that of many West Asian countries, China, and so on.

A few decades ago, our own tolerance level was arguably higher than it is today. Consider, for example, how Jawaharlal Nehru reacted to certain political caricatures criticising him, done by cartoonist R.K. Laxman. One morning, Laxman was surprised to receive a call from Nehru. The Prime Minister told him he had so enjoyed his cartoon that morning, and asked if he may have a signed copy of it.

Tolerance for criticism, introspection, learning from mistakes and feedback loops are indeed hallmarks of Baconian logic and scientific methodology. If we don't criticise other people's mistakes and our own past acts, and, more important, learn from the mistakes, how can we progress? If Germans and Americans can criticise their own past actions and make remarkable progress in terms of education, health and standard of living, why can't we do it too? Let's accept that we have made mistakes in the past (and make them in the present time, too), in order to move forward by learning from the mistakes, to march towards a better India.

The other viewpoint: Conversely, in Germany I also met a youngster who, instead of acknowledging the mistakes of his country, swore by his opinion that the Holocaust never happened, and that the whole story was only propaganda created by Jews and a leftist lobby. "Have you been to Topography of Terror?" I asked. According to him, everything in that museum comprised doctored, fabricated lies. Hitler and the Nazis were good people. Later I found there are hundreds of people like him, those who subscribe to the theory of Holocaust denial, considering it to be in the nature of a conspiracy theory.

Conspiracy theories are everywhere. Perhaps the best-known among them is the moon-landing hoax, which pronounces that the Americans never landed on the moon; all six moon landings were staged, manufactured lies by NASA's Apollo programme. Other examples include flat earth (thousands of people still swear by the theory (the earth is flat, not round!) and intelligent design (god created the world in a period of a week some thousands of years ago). There are dozens of conspiracy theories in India, including the glorification of our past, and giving credit to the vedas for the discovery of aircraft, plastic surgery, the Internet.

When even some established historians and academics swear by such conspiracy theories, and when such theories are fed in as facts into mainstream scholarly literature and textbooks, the situation becomes more serious — an unethical practice called historical revisionism.

The fight between history based on evidence and historical revisionism is analogous to that between science and pseudoscience — the ignorance that wears the white-lab coat of an experimental scientist and masquerades in public as ambassadors of real science while evading Popper's falsifiability and appealing to the public through emotion and anecdotes rather than evidence-based and reproducible claims. Of course, we have countless "scientists" who consult horoscopes and astrologers for the arranged marriage of their children, and consult homeopaths. One example of historical revisionism is the controversial revision of textbooks that occur in India from time to time.

All of it boils down to Yin and Yang — the carnal struggle between two extremes; one that is retrogressive, stubborn, not open to criticism and is not evidence-based (historical revisionism and pseudoscience), and the other that is progressive, flexible, open to criticism and evidence-based (scholarly history and science). Lies vs. Truth. The ultimate choice is ours.

►REDUCE FOOD WASTAGE

(# lesson on conscience)

Food turning surplus at celebrations and other gatherings should be collected and given to the poor

Marriages, birthday celebrations, anniversaries, alumni meetings, conferences, seminars and many similar events lay out lavish multi-course feasts with plenty of starters, soups and salads followed by the main course and ending with desserts. After the events, mounds of food are dumped in dustbins, unmindful of its value to the poor who go hungry.

Most such gatherings serve buffets. The tendency of food wastage is more when people help themselves. They pick more than what they can eat only to waste the excess.

Similar wastage happens when hotels serve complimentary breakfast buffets. Wherever food is free and in plenty, people take more than what they can eat. Those fortunate to have surplus food forget the plight of those who do not have enough to eat. Millions of people die of malnutrition and hunger in India. Starvation deaths in some parts of the country are now new. The Global Hunger Index, 2019 places India at 102 among 117 countries, indicating a serious level of hunger. Despite considerable industrial and economic growth

and self-reliance in foodgrain production, India is unable to provide enough food to a large number of people, especially women and children. Food wastage adds to the woes.

Nearly one-third of the food produced every year gets lost or wasted, but the affluent sections still throw what they can't eat into the dustbins. It is said that 40% of fruits and vegetables and 30% of cereals are lost from inefficient supply chain management and do not reach the market. While significant levels of food losses occur at harvest and during post-harvest handling, a lot of food is lost or wasted during the distribution and consumption stages. Poor transport facilities and roads in the hinterland force some of the farmers to dump their produce in the open. So the problem is not lack of food. It is a lack of ability and sensitivity to distribute food to the poor.

Social involvement: While many public-spirited people and non-governmental organisations collect surplus food and distribute it to the poor, a **more inclusive involvement of society** in this work is required. **Most important is to educate the people** about the ills of food wastage. Social awareness and disseminating knowledge on sharing food resources in a better-organised mode will be able to make a difference.

It may not be possible to regulate food usage in social functions but **display of information and appeals against wasting food** can eventually help. The NGOs can field volunteers to collect surplus food to feed the hungry. Awareness material should be developed to bring about a transformation in the way food is preserved.

Restaurants can be given incentives to reduce food waste, and municipalities should levy a tax on disposing of leftover food. On the lines of Swachh Bharat, campaigns can be launched to reduce food wastage.

Unless elimination of food wastage becomes an agenda of everyone, it is difficult to end hunger. Organisations can launch corporate social responsibility programmes to eliminate food wastage. **Coordinated work of government, corporates and NGOs** will be able to change the mindset of people.

▶BE A GOOD DRIVER

(# lesson on conscience)

As you sit behind the wheel, you shoulder the huge responsibility of ensuring safety against all odds

Finally, you got the driving licence, realising a long-cherished dream. And it's the beginning of tense days for us, as you take the vehicle out on your own.

As parents, we are responsible for moulding you as a good citizen, and good road behaviour is part of that discipline.

Driving is an enjoyable task — the reason you wanted us to send you to the driving school after an impatient wait to turn 18. But driving is a serious job that only a responsible person can do. As you sit behind the wheel, you shoulder the huge responsibility of ensuring safety against all odds — bad roads, reckless driving, road rage and so on. Nothing can be an excuse to play with the safety of those in your vehicle and others.

A road accident death may be just a small piece of news, but for the family of the dead, it is a story of untold miseries and trauma for long. Every accident has a "cause", and invariably people talk about how it could have been averted with a little care. It all happens by a moment of carelessness or error of one person. That is the first lesson for a driver.

We may not able to correct the driving habits of another person. But we can discipline ourselves, learning from the mistakes of drivers who had caused accidents and pre-empting every possible cause. As a person who loves the road, it is your duty to do so.

To ensure safety, follow road rules to the letter and keep ego and a "me first" attitude away from the road.

The first part is simple. **Learn road rules and keep the few basic life-saving rules** to your heart always. Resolve now that you will never drive on the wrong side, even for a short distance. You will not park your vehicle on the roadside if there is no sufficient space left for pedestrians to move freely. You will not mind walking a few hundred metres to your destination, or when in the crowded city, taking an auto to the shop you want to go after leaving your vehicle in a parking space safe for other road users. You will never attend a phone while driving; nor stop your vehicle in an unsafe manner to

attend a phone call, forcing other vehicles off their lanes or forcing pedestrians to walk precariously on the vehicle path. When you drive, when you stop, when you park, when you turn, when you open the door… your first concern will be the safety of others on the road.

Resolve now that **road markings and road signs have to be obeyed**. You will never jump the signal, cross the stop line at a pedestrian crossing, overtake or move through the wrong side, carry passengers or goods dangerously, and stop or turn abruptly without proper signal. You will use high beams only when there is no vehicle ahead or opposite. Your vehicle is always maintained well, and you will not drive if even a single lamp is defective.

Doing all these is easy, but the second part is not that. It will take a lot of conditioning to attain this — grooming your mind for the road. It is natural for a responsible citizen to get irritated when others violate safety norms and road rules with impunity. But realise that even getting irritated deters your poise and can lead to an accident. To be a good driver, you will have to **train yourself to compromise on everything for the safety of road users**. You will have to essentially be with drivers who do not follow any discipline, who consider themselves to be smarter than the rest of us.

But take it from me, a good road culture will pay off and you will have the confidence that you will never cause an inconvenience to another road user or leave a chance for anyone to frown upon you for your road behaviour. You will never be caught for a violation. Most important, you are less likely to cause an accident, and that is your prime responsibility as long as you are on the driver's seat.

►INITIATE DIALOGUE

(# lesson on conscience)

Current events have polarised social circles and even families like never before. Spaces for small talk and everyday updates, from dining tables to WhatsApp groups, feel like a minefield as we struggle to speak our minds but also preserve relationships.

To move forward, dialogue is essential among political groups and us. If anything, the dialogue in our homes, canteens and colleges matters more because it shapes the bedrock of values that will inform how we vote and act in the future.

Dialogue is an end in itself. **The point is not conversion of the other to our point of view but creating a common ground and a relationship between interlocutors**. In this space, we find shared understandings of problems and mutually acceptable solutions. But our true endgame is reconciliation manifested in continuing dialogue and constant renegotiation of relationships. In short, neither conquest nor compromise but consistent, enduring communication and growing mutual acceptance should be the fruits of dialogue.

Dialogue is a hothouse flower. Difficult conversations are rarely possible in public spaces. Interlocutors are locked into positions for reasons of personal prestige. Social platforms and public occasions force us to perform our opening positions for an audience, with no space to say, "I do not know" or "I have not thought of this before". Omniscience is expected of us, and intransigence reads as conviction. Make it safe for your interlocutor to speak tentatively, raise questions or begin to change their mind; all those conditions apply to you as well, after all.

Initiate dialogue in relatively private settings where both sides can listen and respond without keeping up appearances. As both of you learn another perspective, you are safe to acknowledge your learning or a shift in your thinking.

Don't alienate: As passions rise, so does the use of angry, intemperate language. We challenge and judge without compassion. Verbal taunts — "Have you no heart?" or "You are narrow-minded and anti-national" — are violence that makes dialogue impossible.

Far better to set aside one's strong feelings and say, "We seem to differ. I would really like to understand your point of view." Open your dialogue with an expression of interest in the other perspective. Could you resist an invitation to teach? Give more importance to the experiences and values that bring them to this opinion than facts they marshal because facts are filtered through experiences and values.

Listen: Many of us feel so frustrated in this present political moment that no one is listening to us. We have facts at our finger-tips, but no one will take us seriously. Inconvenient but important question: how carefully are we listening to others?

When passion and tensions run high, it is hard to hear equally fervent but opposing views. The result is a cacophony of angry soliloquies and gradually, exhausted by our anger, we tune out, claiming futility.

Just deciding that **I am going to listen—genuinely listen—changes that**. However hard, however painful, I will listen. **Having decided to listen, I bring an open mind and an open heart into the dialogue and optimistically expect to find common ground.** I pay attention to the spoken and implicit. I notice body language. I signal listening with responses like "I see" or "Is that so?" I ask real questions, like "I want to understand why you draw that conclusion." From time to time, I offer a summary of what I have heard to demonstrate listening and give the other person a chance to clarify what they meant.

Small stuff: Perfect composition or politically correct language do not matter. People will use words from the languages and discourses they know and no two people draw on the same universe for these. Cut your interlocutor slack and focus on the meaning. If that is not clear, ask, "Did you mean to say this? Have I understood it correctly?" Take responsibility for understanding correctly; it will make the other person more comfortable as she tries to express herself. In the course of a true conversation, we will all make mistakes, have faulty arguments and use the wrong words. We must remain focused on the substance of what to say.

Information and facts are not a cudgel to demolish other points of view (or people), any more than the government's coercive mechanisms are. To initiate and nurture dialogue, one has to be willing to admit ignorance and learn. One must wait to share.

Indeed, what do I, as initiator, bring into the dialogue apart from information? Prejudice disguised as passion? Ego expressed through judgment? These impede empathy and without empathy, dialogue is a ritual. Satyagrahis must work on themselves first, after all.

Dialogues succeed because we genuinely want to understand each other and to communicate with each other. Patience and perseverance follow from this desire and so will that elusive common ground.

►MEND FENCES, KEEP THE CONVERSATION GOING

(# lesson on conscience)

There is no better time than the present to renew broken relations

During a short trip to my hometown, I dug out some of my childhood albums. Most of the photos had five or six friends hugging or leaning casually against motorcycles.

My wife was quick to point out that she had not met one of the friends in the photos. He had been a bosom pal in college, but we are not on talking terms and in touch. I have had several scrumptious meals at his home and roamed on his motorbike as if it was mine. We had bunked classes together to watch matinee shows, and I had fought with other boys for his sake.

However amiable and social we are, we all have a set of persons to whom we have stopped talking to for some reason or other. They can be friends, relatives, neighbours or colleagues.

My grandfather, for instance, stopped talking to his second son for some reason. During family functions, they would share a common room, travel in the common vehicle and eat in the same hall. But they never sank their ego and remained like that till grandpa's death. During the cremation, my uncle remained ostensibly guilt-ridden. I can't imagine a day without talking to my sons, and I wonder what serious issue can force a father and son into such deadlock.

Does the magnitude of a problem determine our threshold to break a beautiful relationship? Often, not. Sometimes the issue would be trivial but vigorous enough to stoke agitated minds. What may appear to be a sinister issue in a fit of rage may turn out to be trivial one as we mature in life.

Trivial matters: People have stopped talking with close friends and family members over unpaid debt of a few hundred rupees, a compound wall encroaching by a few

inches, cutting a tree that infringed on the neighbourhood, skirmish between children, wrong parking of vehicles and so on. I am sure that many would repent.

In my school days, I stopped talking to a friend because he used profanity. Despite his repeated efforts to regain my friendship, I remained cold-hearted. What do we aim to achieve by not talking to someone? Do we want them to be out of our life completely? If we keep snipping relationships by avoiding talking to people whenever we find them on a different page, we may be standing alone in society. There is a popular saying, **"Conflicts can be reduced if we understand that people are not difficult, but different."**

Often, we assume that the other person may atone for the mistake when we stop talking to them but we don't realise that every story has another side to it. We need to talk more whenever we hit a rough patch in our relationships. There is no better time than the present to renew broken relationships. For, there is nothing greater than forgiving and forgetting. If we can take a leaf out of our politicians' lives, it will be how to bury the past and revive relationships.

►CONSTRUCTIVE CRITICISM OF GOVERNMENT

(# lesson on conscience)

It is something which keeps the true essence of democracy alive in a country. Supporting one's country policies and decisions is one part of keeping it on the path of prosperity and development, while keeping track of government activities, being vigilant about them and highlighting loopholes in policies are also needed in a democracy.

In our country, we have people with different ideologies — some criticise the government policies and some support it, while others remain at the top of it appreciating the good policies and highlighting the drawbacks to improve governance. It's common nowadays to see society divided into segments each with a different perspective about the policies undertaken by their governments; it is something which keeps the true essence of democracy alive. There are many instances in the past of governance and society improving because of the positive criticism by some people or group of them. These examples give democracies around the world a chance of improving the quality of governance and hence create a better society.

In recent years in India, there has been a gradual change in perspective of the people regarding their governments. While some of them are a very good sign of a progressive society, some of them are quite worrying too. There is a common notion among some citizens that if they speak something against the actions of their government, then it's probably against the nation too.

This idea which is significant in numbers need to be thoroughly assessed. Chances might be there that some of the criticism may not be on the right note, but many of it if considered by the governments can be helpful in the real-time assessment of the needs and expectations of the people from the government. Unfortunately, there is a decline in these voices nowadays because of the type of mandate which India got in the 2019 election. People who voted for the current government think that it's wrong to speak against the government which they elected to power.

People should realise that it is not the driving force of praise and overwhelming support which keeps the wheels of a government moving but also the steering force of people's participation which keep a check on government, and modify it, if the policies fail to meet the expectations of society as a whole. If people's criticism reaches the government's ear at an appropriate time and in significant numbers, then a lot of resources of the governmental machinery can be utilised wisely for some other activities which are brought to notice by the people itself.

Some experts believe that praise and support of people are very crucial for maintaining efficient governance as it keeps leaders and bureaucrats motivated to work more to increase the overall output of governmental activities on the ground. This is true in practice too but it should be kept in mind that the power vested in the hands of people in a democracy is not only utilised for blindly praising the government but it should be used as an aid, to advise and correct the government whenever required so that the efficiency and quality of governance is maintained.

►WHAT MAKES A GOOD LEADER

(# lesson on conscience)

"If your actions inspire others to dream more, learn more, do more and become more, you are a leader" — John Quincy Adams

Whether you are a multinational CEO, an entrepreneur or even the abbot of a monastery who has leadership responsibilities, it won't work well for you as a leader until actionable strategies for the good of the company or community are in place, your vision is clearly articulated and you become a team player with excellent communication skills.

It is the ability to work with those who are different from us and the capacity to monitor our own personal or professional development needs while having the requisite self-confidence that makes leaders stand out. **Leadership is not just doing the right things; instead it is doing things right**.

To translate their vision into reality, **leaders become role models encouraging growth and development of others** in the group. Even when you want to do something yourself, letting others do it because they wanted to, is a sure sign of good leadership.

The **key aspect of leadership is influence, not authority**. It is best cultivated by example, which inspires others. Scriptural wisdom demands that a good leader first become a good servant, because the way up points down. The glamour of position doesn't matter as much as energy, passion and empathy.

Great leaders have clear goals and know how to accomplish it. **Integrity matters in leadership and at its core is truthfulness**. With integrity, there is nothing to fear because there is nothing to hide, and doing what is right bears no guilt. It is never wrong to do the right thing.

Essential humility in a leader is the self-confidence to recognise the value of others without feeling threatened by them. It is also the **willingness to admit when one is wrong** and that you don't have all the answers. The more egos are controlled, the more we become realistic and learn how to listen.

Courage is the most identifiable trait of leadership which is taking risks without absolute assurance of success. "Courage is rightly considered the foremost of virtues for upon it all others depend," Winston Churchill said. Because there is no certainty in life or business, every commitment made and every action taken entails risks of some kind.

Leadership is the ability to get people to work for you because they want to and gaining cooperation is by getting along with everyone. "If your imagination leads you to understand how quickly people grant your requests, when those requests appeals to their self - interest, you can have practically anything you go after," Napoleon Hill said.

Leaders focus on results knowing what must be achieved by them and others. The ability to focus and make others remain focused on valuable use of time is crucial for performance. **Great leaders focus on strengths more than weaknesses.** Successful people stay positively focused on past successes more than past failures. Knowing the next steps to get closer to fulfilment of goals will greatly help. Leaders who excel are outstanding strategic planners, looking ahead and anticipating trends well ahead of competitors.

Leaders are different from followers and the leader-follower interaction determines which qualities followers develop as a consequence. Leaders who are task-oriented focus on detail. Personality traits of **agreeableness, consciousness, extroversion, openness and self-monitoring characterise a leader with a strong self-image.** The dawn of the 21st century saw the development of integrated theories of "person-organisation-fit", in which the structure of the organisation is compared to the personality of its leader.

Successful organisations tend to employ those with a range of soft leadership criteria that fits the organisations internal environment. **Cognitive ability, personality type, simulation, role play and multi-rater assessments** are thought to be the best predictors of effective leadership.

Superior intelligence with a high IQ is vital but emotional intelligence (EI) trumps regular IQ by a wide margin when it comes to leadership. Basically, emotional intelligence is understanding emotions and responding accordingly, overcoming stress of the moment and being aware of how words and actions affect others. It is widely known that **EI is a key**

component in good leadership and aspiring leaders benefit from training to improve their EI.

Leaders lacking emotional intelligence become unable to gauge the needs and expectations of those they lead and a leader who reacts emotionally without any filters creates mistrust. **Leaders are not born, they are made and good leaderships should grow more leaders like them.**

Conscience and some of the related UPSC questions

Q. What do you understand by the term 'voice of conscience'? How do you prepare yourself to heed to the voice of conscience?

(UPSC 2013)

Q. What is meant by 'crisis of conscience'? Narrate one incident in your life when you were faced with such a crisis and how you resolved the same.

(UPSC 2013)

Q. "The good of an individual is contained in the good of all." What do you understand by this statement? How can this principle be implemented in public life?

(UPSC 2013)

Q. Public servants are likely to confront with the issues of 'Conflict of Interest". What do you understand by the term 'Conflict of Interest' and how does it manifest in the decision making by public servants? If faced with the conflict of interest situation, how would you resolve it? Explain with the help of examples..

(UPSC 2015)

Q. One of the tests of integrity is complete refusal to be compromised. Explain with reference to a real life example.

(UPSC 2017)

UPSC ESSAY 2020: Mindful manifesto is the catalyst to a tranquil self.

CASE STUDIES FOR PRACTICE

MAINS GS PAPER IV

Case 1: In one of the districts of a frontier state, narcotics menace has been rampant. This has resulted in money laundering, mushrooming of poppy farming, arms smuggling and near stalling of education. The system is on the verge of collapse. The situation has been further worsened by unconfirmed reports that local politicians as well as some senior police officers are providing surreptitious patronage to the drug mafia. At that point of time a woman police officer, known for her skills in handling such situations is appointed as superintendent of police to bring the situation to normalcy.

Q. If you are the same police officer, identify the various dimensions of the crisis. Based on your understanding, suggest measures to deal with the crisis. (250 words)

Background: Narcotics is a serious threat to the health and welfare of human beings and adversely affect the ethics, security, economic, social and other foundations of society.

Stakeholders: Public, State, Politicians and Police, Civil society and NGO's, Hospitals and Rehabilitation centres, Me as a police officer, Country at large

Various dimensions of the crisis:

Economic

- Poppy cultivation and drug trafficking may become a way of life and a family business for many.
- Negatively impact education giving rise to unemployment.
- Increase government spending on social infrastructure and security.

Social

- Health crisis will lead to out of pocket expenditure accentuating poverty.
- Youth and Children are mostly likely to be the target consumer and also for utilised for purpose of illicit production, distribution and trade in narcotic drugs.

Ethical

- Negatively impact value system giving rise to moral crisis and weak social fabrics.
- Black money can corrupt the structures of government, legitimate financial business and society at all its levels.

Security

A frontier state is likely to be affected by cross-border drug trafficking and other related organized crimes (like arms smuggling) undermining the legitimate economies and threatening the security of the area.

Legal

Illegal as per Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances Act, Prevention of Illicit Trafficking in Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances Act and United Nation's drug conventions

Measures to deal with the crisis:

1. Identification and eradication of illicit poppy cultivation by mapping sensitive areas.
2. Strengthening of the intelligence apparatus to improve the information collection in co-ordination with various drug law enforcement agencies.
3. Regular training programs to enhance and sharpen the specialized skills of law enforcement personnel.
4. Promotion of ethics and integrity among police personnel.
5. Request government, civil societies, educational institutes and media to support with awareness drive in the region.
6. Appeal government for an integrated rural development with economically viable alternatives to illicit cultivation.
7. Promote value education for strengthening value system.
8. Strengthening facilities of hospitals and rehabilitation centres with support from various stakeholders.
9. Try to investigate politicians and police personnel involved in the crime.

10. For the well-being of every individual and nation as a whole, collective efforts in right direction are required to fight the menace of narcotics.

Case 2: You are heading the rescue operations in an area affected by severe natural calamity. Thousands of people are rendered homeless and deprived of food, drinking water and other basic amenities. Rescue work has been disrupted by heavy rainfall and damage to supply routes. The local people are seething with anger against the delayed limited rescue operations. When your team reaches the affected area, the people there heckle and even assault some of the team members. One of your team members is even severely injured. Faced with this crisis, some team members plead with you to call off the operations fearing threats to their life.

Q. In such trying circumstances, what will be your response? Examine the qualities of a public servant which will be required to manage the situation. (250 words)

Facts of the case:

- An area affected by severe natural calamity.
- Rescue work has been disrupted.
- The local people are angry against the delayed limited rescue operations.
- Team members getting heckled and assaulted by people from affected area.
- One of the team members is severely injured.
- Some team members plead to call off the operations.

Ethical Dilemma Involved: Devotion to Duty vs Self-protection/interest

Primary Response as the head of rescue mission:

- **Motivate Team:** Will try to uplift the morale of the team by making them remember that call off duty is above personal injury citing examples of soldiers sacrificing their life to defend the nation.
- **People Management:** Persuade people to support us in rescue operation instead of creating hurdle.
- **Local Leader/NGO's/Civil Society:** Request them to help in pacifying the situation and also in providing help in rescue.
- **First-Aid:** to injured team member.

Secondary Response:

- **Local Government:** Request to extend more support in relief measure.
- **Media:** Country wide appeal through various media to NGO's etc. and public at large extend support. This will help in addressing the limited rescue measures.
- **Ham Radio Operators:** Urge them to contribute by helping in establishing communication, which will further help in rescue operations.

Qualities required of a public servant to manage such a situation

- **Emotional Intelligence:** A public servant needs to have emotional intelligence to understand the grievances of people and act accordingly. In this case, if the mission gets aborted the sole purpose of serving people will get compromised.
- **Leadership:** In such trying circumstances a leader with courage and conviction and one who leads by setting example becomes imperative.
- **Compassion and Service:** Public servants are expected to concentrate primarily on serving the people, and in so doing put possibilities for personal advantage/disadvantage to one side.
- **Selflessness:** Public servants should take decisions solely in terms of the public interest.
- **Team Work:** Respect for team mates and protecting them is also important at such a situation.
- **Empathy:** Public servants are required to maintain responsiveness, courtesy and good behaviour**.**
- **Professionalism:** It is to perform and discharge his duties with the highest degree of professionalism and dedication to the best of his abilities.

Thus, with above qualities as per **Central Civil Services Conduct Rules** it becomes imperative for every Government servant holding a supervisory post to take all possible steps to ensure the integrity and devotion to duty of all Government servants for the time being under his control and authority.

PART THREE

ESSAYS

of

THE MONTH

Selected essays from Rau's GSI students

ESSAY 1: INNOVATION IS KEY DETERMINT OF ECONOMIC GROWTH AND SOCIAL WELFARE

SCIENCE #DEVELOPMENT

Disclaimer: The viewpoints in the topic are strictly personal of the writer. The role of Rau's IAS Study Circle is to present the write-up in its original form, hence the study circle neither endorses nor rejects any viewpoint in the submission. The purpose is only to showcase the manner of writing.

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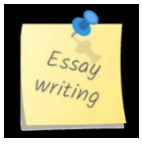

The entire human history can be viewed as history of human innovation. The early humans innovated to control fire and invented the wheel. In later times, humans innovated stone tools and later metallic tools. Thus, the progress of humans as a race is closely linked to the innovations that humans did to make themselves fittest in evolutionary struggle.

Coming to modern age, this age is characterized by innovations of industrial revolution. These innovations has led to tremendous economic growth as well as social welfare.

For instance, economy has transmitted from mainly agricultural nature to mainly industries led by modern technologies in modern age. Further, Social welfare has also increased manifold in modern age vis-à-vis pre-industrial age. In terms of education, we today study scientific education rather than traditional religious education. The same goes with healthcare which shifted from unscientific to scientific nature.

Additionally, social welfare should also be seen in the shift in values that innovation brought. In modern age, we have democratic values which oppose orthodox discriminations.

Thus, we can see that innovation is key determinant of economic growth and social welfare.

In this essay, we will first explore the meaning of economic growth and social welfare. Then we will understand how innovation leads to economic growth and social welfare. Further, we will analyse the challenges India face in sphere of innovation and how can we overcome those challenges.

Explainer: Economic Growth and Social Welfare

Starting with economic growth, it can, in its most rudimentary form, considered as GDP growth (Gross Domestic Product).

But for true economic growth, GDP growth needs to be sustained and made more inclusive. In times of climate change and threats it can pose to economy, sustainability is an important aspect.

At the same time, economic growth needs to be inclusive as economy is not sum of incomes of few elites but that of the masses. But how do we ensure that economy becomes inclusive?

The answer to this is by ensuring social welfare. Social welfare is improvement in standard of living of the masses. This includes education, health, housing, food, internet etc.

Thus, we can see that economic growth and social welfare in their true form are not mutually exclusive but are interlinked. This aspect is captured by concept of development which can be measured by Human

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Development Index and Multi-dimensional Poverty Index.

Now, after understanding economic growth and social welfare. Let us understand how innovation leads to them.

Innovation – an expressway for economic growth and social welfare

Innovation is essentially a process of problem solving in a more efficient manner under the constraints of resource availability. Thus, it is natural for innovation to be the expressway for economic growth and social welfare.

More specifically, innovations like green technology, and circular economy's technology will promote sustainability of economic growth. Examples of innovation in solar energy, wind energy, Biofuels and atomic energy are case in point for green technology. On the other side, recycling innovations and waste to energy technology are examples of innovations leading to circular economy.

Apart from promoting sustainability, innovation in field of social welfare will not just promote social welfare but also promote inclusiveness of economic growth. **For instance**, in education sector, innovations like Tele-education and Massive open online courses (MOOC) are promoting quality education to the masses and democratization of education.

Further, in health sector, innovations have direct bearing on lives saved. Two of the most important innovations in health sector are vaccination that prevent diseases and health insurance which is financial innovation making health care affordable.

The same is the case with food where green revolution has prevented famines in India since 1970s. Thus, we can see that innovation is an expressway to economic growth and social welfare i.e. development of humans.

Now, let us analyse the challenges that India faces in sphere of Innovation.

Innovation in India: potholes on express way

For any vibrant innovation ecosystem, we need 4 things – man power, funds, industry-academia link and patent infrastructure. India faces challenges in all 4 of these categories.

Starting from manpower, India has demographic advantage, however, this advantage is not getting fully utilized. This advantage gets eroded starting from the childhood as 40% Indian children are stunted and 20% wasted. This impares growth of healthy mind. To add to difficulties to manpower, education in India is characterized by rote learning. ASER report by NGO Pratham points out that around 50% of students don't achieve documentary levels of learning outcomes.

Now coming to funding of innovation, the R & D expenditure of government is <1% of GDP. To increase the scarcity of funds, private sector R & D expenditure is virtually non-existant. Even this meager amount of funds are not getting utilized in best way because of dysfunctioned industry-academia link. To highlight the gravity of situation, research in India is often mocked as resume – research.

Finally, in the patent infrastructure, Indian patent laws are of good quality. However, implementation of these laws is not up to the mark. For instance, it takes 18 months to get a patent in India as compared 1–4 months in Singapore.

Thus, these are the 4 major potholes on innovation expressway and India needs to urgently repair them.

Innovation in India: repairing the potholes

Starting with manpower, to reap the demographic advantage, India needs to provide health care and education to its children.

In healthcare, government has various schemes to ensure nourishment of children for example, Prime Minister Matru Jandhan Yojana covers infants less than 6 months old, ICDS and midday meal covers nourishment of children older than 2 years to 14 years. Thus, the gap between 6 months to 2 years needs to be filled as the Kasturirangan Committee pointed out that major mental development happens in 1st 1000 days.

After ensuring proper development of brain, the brain needs to be trained by quality education. There is need to shift towards a curriculum that promotes critical thinking and activity based learning. Also comprehensive

continuous examination should be introduced to remove role learning for exam mentality.

Moving forward, the government should increase budgetary support for R & D to at least 1% of GDP. Also, private sector needs to be motivated to increase its R & D spending. This can be done by providing tax incentives for R & D expenditure. Also, coorporates situated in tech parks should be mandated, by law, to invest a threshold of their profits in R & D.

Additionally, to sustain the ecosystem of innovation, profitability of R & D expenditure needs to increase. This will happen when industry – academia link is strong. For this, joint research and sponsored research should be promoted.

On top of this, entrepreneurship in universities should be increased so that university students can take R & D from Labs to market.

Finally, patent infrastructure need to be strengthened. This requires reducing Turn around time for patents to less than 4 months from current 18 months. For this to happen, we also need patent drafting professionals which make the process more robust.

Lastly, patent enforcement should be improved. This can happen by have special judges with expertise in patent laws to adjudicate patent infringement cases.

Thus, implementation of these reforms will repair India's innovation expressway which will set India on a path of economic growth and social welfare.

To conclude, innovation is indeed key determinant of economic growth and social welfare. However, innovation should not be taken for granted as it needs vibrant innovation ecosystem.

ESSAY 2: I MEASURE THE PROGRESS OF A COMMUNITY BY THE DEGREE OF PROGRESS WHICH WOMEN HAVE ACHIEVED

SOCIAL ISSUES

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Dr. Bhimrao Ambedkar used the degree of progress achieved by women as a yardstick to measure the overall progress made by the society. One of the most prominent reasons why the American and European societies are developed economically, technologically, socially and politically is the freedom and liberty enjoyed by the women of their societies.

Renaissance <13th century> and enlightened <15th century> were major events which changed the course of history. American Revolution for the first time displayed

to the whole world the strength of democracy. The French Revolution gave room for novel ideas such as liberty, equality and fraternity. All these liberal ideas, brought with them a new age for women. An age where women were independent to take their decisions, an age where the role of women was not just confined within the four walls of the house; an age where they enjoyed greater political freedom; an age where they worked shoulder to shoulder with men to take their countries to newer heights of success and glory.

However, the case with India has been diagonally opposite. In the Rig Vedic Age <3rd century BC>, women did enjoy equal rights with that of the men. Archaeological evidence and scriptures depict that women did participate in the Sabhas and Samitis <political assemblies> of those times. Howsoever, with the onset of the later Vedic Age, the position of women got degraded in the society. Slowly, but steadily they started losing their rights and freedom. Religious scriptures and manuscripts written in those times further propounded the image of a women to that of a puppet whose strings were held by the men of the society. Her role in the society was just to maintain the household chores and reproduce so that the generation continues. For instance, Manusmriti projected women as a source of misery. Thus, it was one of the reasons why Dr. Ambedkar, publicly burnt the book.

Patriarchy was thus manifested in the order of Indian society. Further, till the British invasion of India, the people of India were not exposed to the liberal ideas of equality and freedom. Hence, Indian society was backward, orthodox and male dominated. But, with the British Raj also came the western education and the idea of equality and freedom. Many Indian intellectuals were thoroughly influenced by these ideas and the degree to which the European society had progressed. Orthodoxy and belief in superstitious ideas were attributed to as the main reasons for the poor state of Indian society. Patriarchy was at its helm as was evident from the evil practices of Sati and Child marriage. Raja Ram Mohan Roy and Ishwar Chandra Vidya Sagar rose to the occasion to fight off these evils. Further, education was something from which the women of the Indian society were kept aloof. The basic perception, which was manifested by scriptures was that a girl is someone else's wealth; and therefore they were married off early. Jyotirao Phule and Savitribai Phule were two pioneers who worked for the cause of women education and tried to bring about a social change in the society. Furthermore, movements such as the Prarthana Sabha were stated to provide support to widows. Therefore, it can be said that, with the onset of British Raj, some social reforms took place to alleviate the position of women. However, these reforms were not successful in altogether overthrowing patriarchy and establish a society which provided an equal states to men and women. Hence, in post-independent India, the fathers of our constitution safeguarded Right to Equality as the fundamental right. Thus was to ensure that women progress and come on an equal footing to that of men.

This ideal message of the Constitution has time and again being reinforced by the Parliament by enforcement of several legislations which ought to improve the status of women. Initiatives such as "Beti Bachao Beti Padhao" emphasized on eradicating female infanticide as a social evil and educating girl child to help her achieve her targets; Pradhan Mantri Matra Vandana Yojana is a noble initiative to aid and help the pregnant and lactating mothers; POSHAN Abhiyan <National Nutrition Mission> aims at providing proper nutrition; Vishakha Guideline, 1997 and Prevention of Women at workplace Act have ensured that women are safe at places of work; POCSO <Prevention of children from sexual offences> Act makes sure that children are not sexually harassed.

All the measures taken by the government have indeed proved to be noble initiatives in ensuring equality and social, economic and political justice for women. However, patriarchy, even today seems to be dominant character of the Indian society. Further, new focus of crimes against women have started raising their heads. According to the National Crimes Record Bureau <NCRB>, there has been a surge in the amount of rapes in the country. The Nirbhaya Rape Case, Unnao Rape Case, Hathras Rape Case and the Hyderabad Rape Case are some examples of the most heinous crimes against women. Further, it is estimated that a women gets raped in India in every two hours. Such cases and estimates raise some serious questions on our security apparatus and the mindset of the country.

Marital rapes, is another crime against women which often goes unnoticed and unquestioned. Acid attacks and hate crimes are other examples which demonstrate that even in the 21st century, we have not been able to provide a safe and secure environment to women as envisaged by our Constitution. Moreover, female infanticide, dowry and child marriage continue to be practiced in some rural pockets Rajasthan, Bihar and Uttar Pradesh. On the economic front, there have been various factors which have resisted women from achieving newer heights. The Glass-Ceiling effect experienced by women often does not let her realize her own potential. On the political front, poor representation of women in parliament and State Legislative assemblies has been an issue which must be dealt with security. Health indicators for women have been poor. Women have been suffering through malnourishment and anaemia. Such a state during pregnancies also impacts the child. A malnourished women gives birth to a child which is not only physically weak but also does not possess the required learning capabilities. Thus, it leads to poor human capital formation for the country. Further, there has also been an increasing trend towards "feminization of poverty". With an increase in the rate of rural-urban migration, women are left alone to feed the family. Also, there has been an increase in the trend of feminization of agriculture. However, as the land is not registered in the name of the women, she is unable to reap the benefits of any financial services. In the urban areas, majority of the women are employed in the informal sector. This deprives them of any financial security such as pensions or provident fund.

In the light of the above problems faced by women today, there is a need to bring about social change which shall help in addressing the problems and elevating the status of women. Women Education must be insured, as teaching a women makes the entire generation educated. Further, according to the Comprehensive Report on Nutritional Security, it was found out that education of women and nourishment of children were directly linked. Educating a women can also help in effectively addressing the issue of malnourishment. Further, laws for protecting women against heinous crimes must be made more stringent. Also, there is a need to speeden up the justice to women. Pro-active policing is the need of the hour to upgrade women security in the country. Further, there is a need to bring about a behavioural change in the society. This change can be brought about by shunning commodification of women. All this will ensure that a social change is brought in, which makes the society safe and just for women. Such a safe and just society will be progressive as envisaged by Dr. B. R. Ambedkar. Hence, what is required today is not a new bill, but political will and administrative skill and then unitedly go for the kill of the social evils.

ESSAY 3: DIGITAL ECONOMY – A LEVELLER OR A SOURCE OF ECONOMIC INEQUALITY

ECONOMY #TECHNOLOGY

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Click on the Zomato app and you will have your pizza delivered at your doorstep, one click on the Uber will make you reach the airport in time and with just a single click, you can actually plan your vacation in Mauritius. Thereby, going digital is no longer an option, it is the default.

Technology has evolved so much in today's time that everyone has become tech savvy. A student with access to internet can learn more than a child with no internet connectivity. A trader can buy his work and sell it online on higher prices. A farmer can stay updated with real time advisory.

Not just this, a young man or woman with internet skills is more likely to be hired at a departmental store. One swipe of the ATM card resolves the issue of carrying cash and the list goes on. It's this digital world which has made every impossible thing possible.

Digital economy is a term coined in the mid 1990s which is considered as the by-product of internet revolution. The digital economy is the worldwide network of economic activities, commercial transactions and professional interactions that are enabled by information and communication technologies. Naming one thing where technology is not present is difficult.

Digital economy has evolved tremendously. Apart from the basic applications, many new features and new areas have emerged such as Internet of things, 5G, data analytics robotics, 3D printing, automatic vehicles, cloud computing, artificial intelligence, etc. It finds application in education, entertainment, banking, science, healthcare, financial services, space, medicine, agriculture and so on.

Digital technologies provide a level playing field, easy accessibility, affordability and services to all. It's a saying that in 21st century one cannot completely switch off!

Digital Economy as a leveller

Was not man apprehensive when computers had first arrived? Was not joblessness provoked as a fear at that time? Similarly, with the fast pacing and globalised world, man is again doubtful about the possibility of these technologies replacing men or brushing gender equality.

Starting from our own households, digitization has shaped our lives such as smart electricity, LED TVs, smartphones, ipads, automatic cars and what not. The problem of cash transactions during availing banking services, health care services, payment of fees, shopping etc. has been eradicated through digital payment modes like net banking, credit/debit cards, Paytm, Phone Pe etc.

Technology finds numerous applications outside of the households such as in the production sector where digitization has seen spur in innovation which is engine of growth. Many e-commerce companies, cloud computing, ITES, smart grid etc. have availed these technological advancement opportunities for producers and sellers.

B2B e-commerce between industries and many retail giants like Amazon, Flipkart etc. have increased production efficiency and high output. Thereby, improving India's ranking in Ease of Doing Business Report published by World Bank from 77 in 2018 to 63 in 2019.

The Govt. of India's 'Digital India' program has been instrumental in bringing change towards paperless transactions. Most of the e-commerce companies monitor consumer behaviour and provide desired shopping material at their fingertips, reducing travel time and increasing affordability for customers that today customers prefer online shopping than traditional shopping methods.

Artificial Intelligence has started to make its way in the field of health care and medicine. India faces shortage of qualified doctors i.e. 0.76 doctors/1000 population, non-uniform accessibility and affordability issues. Artificial intelligence in combination with internet of medical things (IOMT) will serve as new nervous system for healthcare. Machine learning in assisting pathologists will guide in quality and precise diagnosis of diseases like cancer.

Today's farmer also will be engaged in 'climate smart agriculture' where with the help of digital technology she will be aided in real-time advisory regarding weather forecast, monitoring soil health, condition of micro nutrients, predictability of monsoons etc. Certain technologies involve the use of AI in monitoring soil health such as the Plantix App by the Berlin – based

Germany which examines images of soil and uses whether there is any kind of pest or disease and offers remedial step for action. There is also an AI sowing app which predicts apt sowing time for beautiful harvest.

USA and China account for 75% of all patents in digital technologies and 50% of global spending or Internet of things (IOT). 4th industrial Revolution is known to transform existing technologies towards a brighter and improved quality of life.

Govt. in planning to establish 100 smart cities under the 'Smart India' mission which will incorporate the use of smart and advanced technology towards the creation of smart parks. Smart homes, crowd management, AI driven service delivery etc.

Change of such a kind requires change of people's attitudes because it's very hard to transform the culture and workforce to the digital world if all of the processes are stuck in the traditional world. If people do no adapt themselves to the fast changing world, then they will log behind most others and will not be able to compete.

Technology is sometimes also treated as a driver of economic inequality due to globalization, organizational and situational factors. Many inequalities are observed such as in terms of income difference which eventually breeds inequalities among people.

Large firms are in concentrated markets where executives are paid exorbitantly compared to the rest of the areas. But, these are exceptions and is not so always. There are some difference among the gender usage of technology such as per the Digital Economy Report, in around 2/3rd of countries women using internet are less than men.

Some disparities remain but to eradicate them UNCTAD recommends enhancing e-commerce radius in which firms and people create value through digital economy.

First step would be formulation of appropriate strategy through establishment of a leading ministry to enhance focus on digital technology, awareness generation towards importance of digital empowerment, engagement into public-private partnership dialogues. Just as PPP model has been proved to be effective in the construction of highways, bridges etc. similar model can be applied in the digital technology as well.

Second, creations of ICT infrastructure such as fast, affordable, reliable internet services and last mile connectivity especially connecting the rural population those in inaccessible hinterlands. PPP model can serve as national backbone infrastructure for access to internet bandwidth.

Third step would involve creation of legal and regulatory framework to regulate the e-commerce firms and digital economy and laws aimed at consumer protection, data protection, Intellectual property right etc. This would also include stringent provisions in ease of violation of laws and rules.

Fourth, would include development of skills i.e. making the workforce eligible for high-skilled or expertise requiring tasks through reskilling and upskilling. This can take place through vocational training by providing incentives such tax holidays, tax breaks/grants to employer. Recognition of training provided by informal training institutes such as in various diploma courses or distance education courses. One such initiative is of Ministry of Tribal Affairs to impart training to tribal girls (5000) by mentoring them on weekly basis in collaboration with Facebook.

Empowering women in the digital economy is a pre-requisite for upward mobility of women and making them financially empowered. Wireless women for entrepreneurship and empowerment is a program in India which is women driven ICT based micro social enterprises.

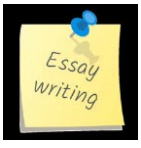
At the end, fostering digital entrepreneurship and innovation through large scale 'talk-shop' conferences such as i4 Policy initiative in Africa incorporates hub managers for policy dialogues.

Many such initiatives like these will help in making digital economy as a leveller and not as a source of economic inequality.

Times are changing and are bound to change, it depends on us how we adjust ourselves to the changing times.

ESSAY 4: ROLE OF OPPOSITION IN DEMOCRACY

#DEMOCRACY



Indian Parliamentary democracy is getting a bad name due to repeated suspension of work in Parliament. Despite important Bills pending in the Parliament, ruling party and opposition are at loggerheads on trivial issues. These results in wastage of important time on baseless discussions and the decisions demanding immediate attention are lost in the noise, chaos and clamour. The role of the opposition is not to oppose anything presented for discussion but to look at the issues which can be discussed for the betterment of the things proposed. Opposition for the sake of opposition is diverging from the roles and responsibility of a constructive opposition.

Some forms of ruling systems cannot tolerate opposition, and root it out wherever it arises. Other forms not only tolerate it, but make room for it within the institutions of government. This feature of 'internalised opposition' has sometimes been taken as a mark of limited, as opposed to absolute, government, and also as the mark of politics, as opposed to coercion. It is hard to imagine the feature without extremely complex institutions and constitutional devices: it is one of the principal problems of political thought to discover what makes such opposition possible.

Considering the above, what is the role of opposition in a democracy? The use of the term 'opposition', to denote forces within political institutions that resist the ruling officers or party, is comparatively recent. J. Cam Hobhouse, speaking in the House of Commons in 1826, remarked that it was said to be very hard on His Majesty's ministers to raise objections to some proposition. For his own part, he thought it was more hard on His Majesty's opposition to compel them to take this course. Hansard records laughter at the phrase **"His Majesty's opposition".**

Although the term 'opposition' was used as far back as the eighteenth century to refer to a party or a caucus within an assembly, the suggestion of an established opposition is relatively new. It is now, however, quite normal to refer to a 'loyal opposition', and to imply that the interests of the State are as well served by the opposition as by the government itself.

The 'opposition' in the modern UK Parliament consists not merely of opposition parties or factions, but principally of a **'shadow formation'**. The offices of government are imitated within the opposition, which thereby forms itself into a body prepared to substitute for all the occupants of those offices at any time. The opposition has its leader, its base organisation and committees, and usually responds to every move of the government with counterproposals, representing, in theory, what it would do if it were in office.

Even in states with high levels of repression it is rare to find no trace of opposition. In single-party systems, the opposition may exist as an underground movement as in the former Union of Soviet Socialist Republics where no formal opposition to the Communist Party of the Soviet Union was permitted but dissidents like Boris Yeltsin continued to exist. Or an opposition may engage in armed struggle as in El Salvador. Undue repression of the opposition often results in bloodshed and even change of government through violent means.

In democratic systems, the opposition is officially permitted and recognised. Even the leader of opposition is given an honourable place in the system. In Britain, the position of the leader of Her Majesty's opposition is formalised in statute and he or she has certain rights, such as the right of reply to prime ministerial broadcasts.

In India, too, the opposition leader has been given certain rights and privileges on par with a cabinet minister if he/she commands the support of the required number of Parliament members.

The concept of opposition in the modern democratic state is closely connected with the idea of the political party. A political party is a more or less organised group of citizens who act together as a political unit, have distinctive aims and opinions on the leading political issues and problems in the state, and who, by acting together as a political unit, seek to obtain control of the government. The party that is out of the government at a given point of time is called the opposition party. The number of the opposition party/parties may be one or more depending on whether there is a dual-party or multiparty system.

The most prominent question that may strike one's mind is: **Why does democracy demand the existence of / opposition?** An opposition party always looks for an opportunity to replace the party-in-government, and implement its own policies and programmes. As a result, it serves two purposes. **One**, the government of the day eschews being arbitrary in its actions and negligent of the interests of the people in general; and **Second,** the people of a democratic country are offered an alternative in governance of the country in their interests.

The opposition parties **also enable men and women** who think alike on public questions to unite in support of a common body of principles and policies and to work together to see that those principles and policies are adopted and implemented by the government. Without organisation, the people can neither formulate principles easily nor agree on policy. The opposition makes articulate the inarticulate desires of sections of the masses and gives expression to their pent-up feelings. This goes a long way in checking violence and political crimes which are, in reality, fatal for the healthy survival of democracy.

Out of the innumerable problems which call for solution in a state, the opposition is expected to select those which are comparatively urgent, study them, think out solutions and present them to the people and to the government. And, thus, it **acts as a "broker of ideas"**. It preserves a sense of continuity in public policy, organises and educates the electorate, and helps to carry on and necessitate regular elections. It also dramatises politics and keeps the nation politically alive. It keeps the government on its toes.

The opposition, like the judiciary, is an **agent for safeguarding the Constitution** in case the government wittingly or unwittingly does something to violate it. The opposition also necessitates periodic interpretation, reinterpretation and amendment of the Constitution to suit changes in times, circumstances and priorities. In most democracies, the opposition's views have to be taken into consideration in **legislating on socially-sensitive matters**. The opposition has the capacity to instil in the government the confidence and ability to deal with national crises. Here, the opposition's support means that the entire country is behind the government in the hour of crisis. Not many would have forgotten the thundering speech and support given by Atal Behari Vajpayee in the Parliament (1971) when the Government of India led by Indira Gandhi had to withstand the Pakistani aggression. In the absence of the opposition, the government cannot be sure of the entire population's support. Moreover, the opposition also gives credence and authenticity to any measures of the government taken in the interests of the people and the state. The parties outside power extend support to certain measures as they cannot afford to be regarded as anti-people or anti-nation as they, too, have ultimately to face the praise or wrath of the public. Thus, the opposition does not always have to oppose the government.

Sometimes the parties in opposition oppose the government measures merely for the sake of opposition. This delays even the progressive steps of the government and results in waste of time, money and material. It also misleads the masses. Not infrequently, the leaders in opposition resort to demagogy which is harmful for the nation's health. Howsoever politically ignorant the people may be, they cannot forgive such irresponsible and delinquent behaviour on the part of an opposition party.

In a democracy, the modus operandi of the opposition involve going to the people and criticising the government, giving press-statements, debating and discussing issues in Parliament, arousing public opinion,

both national and international, and placing no-confidence motions against the government. In India, submitting a memorandum to the President is also a common practice. All these are commensurate with the democratic norms and contribute to the consolidation and stabilisation of democracy in the social and political system.

To sum up, the opposition fulfils certain necessary functions—so necessary, indeed, that many competent thinkers consider it essential to the working of representative government. Of course, the opposition sometimes delays the proceedings and the implementation of vital legislation. But the balance tilts towards its beneficial impact rather than the baneful. If democracy has come to stay, it is not because it is the perfect form of self-government. Unlike dictatorship or totalitarian systems, it does not believe in self-evident principles. No plan or policy can benefit the people if we look only at its 'pros' and deny the 'cons'. Only the opposition can provide those 'cons'. Above all, it is the opposition that puts a rein on the power of the government and checks it from becoming absolute.

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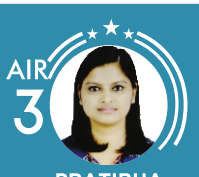
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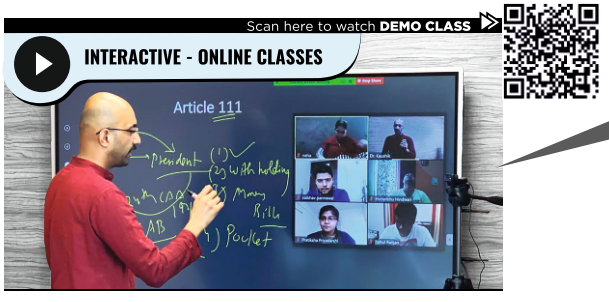

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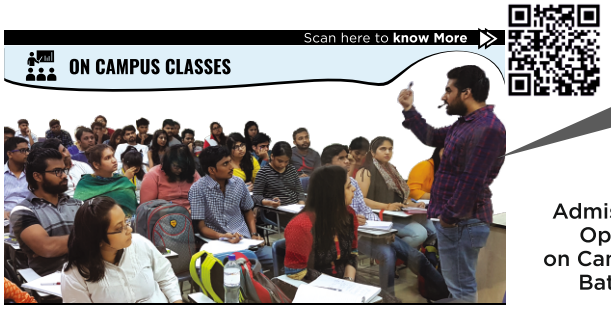

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